



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

## Senate Deputy Leader Gianaris Announces Julie Schwietert Collazo As 2019 Woman Of Distinction Honoree

MICHAEL GIANARIS May 8, 2019

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ALBANY, N.Y. – Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris announced Julie Schwierert Collazo as his 2019 New York State Senate Woman of Distinction. Schwierert Collazo is the co-founder of Immigrant Families Together, a non-profit that provides bail for parents in ICE custody and support services for families separated by the federal government’s “Zero Tolerance” policy. Senator Gianaris recognized Schwierert Collazo during a ceremony in

Albany Tuesday.

“Immigration policy is personal for so many of us in Queens who come from immigrant families. This federal government’s anti-immigrant agenda is un-American and shameful. Thankfully, good people like Julie are organizing and fighting back,” said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. “I am honored to support her work with Immigrant Families Together and pleased to recognize her as a Woman of Distinction.”

“I would be happiest if I never had to dress up and attend an awards ceremony, as that would mean that our most pressing social problems would be solved. But since there is so much work we all have to do, I am grateful to be honored with the Women of Distinction Award, and more so, I am grateful to be supported by Senator Gianaris and his staff in my work as the co-founder and director of Immigrant Families Together,” said **Julie Schwietert Collazo**. “Awards such as this one have a profound ripple effect, raising awareness of the honorees' work and amplifying their ability to spread information and awareness, and to exert influence, over matters that affect us all. Thank you for this honor.”

Julie Schwietert Collazo is a former social worker and creative arts therapist, and a writer, editor, and translator. In June 2018, along with her husband, Francisco Collazo, she founded what has evolved into Immigrant Families Together, an organization of rapid response volunteers who oppose the federal government’s zero tolerance and family separation policies.

In six short months, and almost entirely through social media, Julie and IFT raised nearly a million dollars, and, to date, posted bond for more than 65 parents, grandparents, and older siblings detained by Immigration and separated from their children and families. They also

provide ongoing support and services for many of these families so they can build a healthy, stable life for themselves as they undergo asylum proceedings.

She is a sought-after speaker and commentator on immigration policy, migration, and resettlement issues. Julie has been a resident of Long Island City since 2003.

The Women of Distinction program is part of the Senate's ongoing celebration of women's history throughout the year. The Senate recognized honorees for their achievement in Albany on May 7, 2019. Each honoree's photograph and biography will be part of an exhibit in the Capitol. Last year, Senator Gianaris recognized Maritza Munoz, the Director of Housing Services at Woodside on the Move.

Photos from the event are available here: <https://bit.ly/2E7pYg7>.