



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Orange County Lawyers and Community Leaders Set Ambitious Goal to Ensure that Indigent Immigrants in Orange County Have Meaningful Access to Bond Funds and a Lawyer to Fight Deportation**

Established in 2017, the Orange County Justice Fund (OCJF) is a California 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation founded in 2017 by a coalition of immigration law professors, bar leaders, and grassroots organizers based in Orange County. The OCJF 's goal is to make Orange County the first county in the country to establish a truly universal representation removal defense fund and bond fund for indigent immigrants. The importance of having Orange County, a historically anti-immigrant county, become the first of its kind in the country is not only symbolic, it is evidence of the changing demographics of this county.

The OCJF aims to address a significant gap in the legal system. Although immigrants to this country threatened with deportation, including adults and children, are entitled to a legal hearing and legal representation, they must obtain one at their own expense. Representation by a trained immigration attorney can cost upwards of about \$6,000 per case. Therefore, most indigent immigrants threatened with deportation are forced to go unrepresented regardless how meritorious their case may be.

Professor at Western State College of Law and President of the Board, Jennifer Koh stresses that, "studies have shown that immigrants represented by an attorney are ten times much more likely to be able to demonstrate their eligibility to stay in the U.S. while their immigration case is pending than those who do not have an attorney." Board Vice President Norma Garcia Guillen, Esq. states, "OCJF intends to increase access to lawyers for immigrants facing deportation and to establish an immigrant bond fund to reunite families separated by immigration detention in Orange County." Found Board member Carlos Perea, OCJF Secretary and community leader with Resilience Orange County, states, "immigrant communities in Orange County have been at the forefront of seeking justice and due process for years, and we are pleased to see OCJF bringing together different stakeholders to make this shared vision a reality."



The OCJF has spent time carefully creating the relationships with community stakeholders. At its inception, OCJF successfully urged the City of Santa Ana to contribute \$65,000 towards the creation of a pilot immigration legal defense fund for Santa Ana residents. In 2018, OCJF successfully secured a commitment by the City of Santa Ana to renew funding for the pilot program in the increased amount of \$85,000. Recently, in less than 20 days, the OCJF has secured over \$50,000 in pledges and donations from bar leaders, community leaders, and raised another \$6,000 in three days through a Facebook Fundraiser exclusively through word of mouth. Past Presidents of the Orange County Hispanic Bar Association alone have pledged over \$30,000 toward this fund. OCJF and its inaugural event has been endorsed by ACLU-Southern California, Congressman Lou Correa, CAIR-Southern California, Hispanic Bar Association of Orange County, the Anti-Defamation League, Hispanic National Bar Association, and Women for American Values and Ethics, among others (for full list go to [www.ocjusticefund.org](http://www.ocjusticefund.org)).

The OCJF will host its inaugural event on **Tuesday, October 23, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.** at The Turnip Rose Promenade in Costa Mesa. Its most ambitious fundraising event to date, proceeds will go to support universal representation for detained immigrants, including people fleeing persecution in their home countries, children, and long-time community members.

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