

June 17, 2025

Dear Members of Congress,

We, the 96 undersigned immigrants' rights and disability rights organizations, urge Congress to immediately restore funding for the Department of Justice's National Qualified Representative Program (NQRP). This vital, life-saving program ensures due process for detained immigrants with serious mental health conditions who are unable to represent themselves in immigration court.

The NQRP was created following the *Franco-Gonzalez v. Holder* decision in 2013, in which a federal court found that the Rehabilitation Act requires appointed counsel for detained individuals who are unrepresented and mentally incompetent to proceed in immigration court. The Department of Justice implemented the program nationally in recognition of its critical role in safeguarding the rights of those with serious mental health conditions. Under the program, representatives are appointed after an immigration judge determines that an individual is unable to represent themselves in immigration court.

Yet on April 25th, the administration abruptly terminated the program in 47 states, stripping protections from hundreds of individuals and creating a dangerous void in our legal system. Only California, Arizona, and Washington remain protected under *Franco*. Litigation has since been filed to challenge this decision, but as of today, no court has blocked the termination, and no public funds are flowing to support this population. This is not just a legal failure – it is a humanitarian crisis.

Without legal representation:

- Immigrants with mental health conditions are facing indefinite detention, wrongful deportation, and life-threatening harm, often to countries where they may face persecution, torture, or death.

- U.S. citizens have already been wrongly detained and deported under these same systems, as recently as two weeks ago, ICE detained a U.S. citizen with intellectual disabilities in Arizona.
- The elimination of the NQRP sends a chilling message: that in our immigration system, disability is punished, not protected.

The NQRP has not only upheld due process but is a lifeline, as seen in the story of Mr. G, a man with epilepsy who had undiagnosed cognitive impairments. His NQRP attorney not only successfully secured his release from immigration detention but also reunited him with his brother and connected him with much-needed medical treatment to treat his condition. The NQRP additionally provided an attorney to Ms. A, a 75-year-old grandmother who suffered major memory loss, disorientation, and hallucinations, who was separated from her grandson upon her arrival in the United States. Her NQRP attorney consistently advocates for her legal case and the continuity of her medical and mental health services. She has no criminal history but has waited more than 6 years for her asylum case to be heard with her NQRP attorney firmly by her side. Mr. G and Ms. A's stories are exemplary of many.

The funding termination is part of the Trump administration's dismantling of due process, and it comes at a time when the administration is escalating efforts to detain, deport, and forcibly disappear our communities, including U.S. citizens, visa holders, and permanent residents. Restoring NQRP funding is a matter of justice, fiscal responsibility, and human dignity. It ensures that our immigration system does not punish people for their disabilities, and that due process is not reserved only for the privileged.

The NQRP helped MDR, who came to the U.S. with his family as a legal permanent resident when he was 7. MDR went on to serve in the U.S. Army and served two tours during the Gulf War. He was diagnosed with PTSD and bipolar disorder, in addition to being treated for an injury he sustained in the army. After being detained by ICE, he attempted to represent himself but faced a series of bureaucratic and procedural

hurdles. An NQRP provider was appointed to his case. The two-time veteran is now released on conditional parole, and his proceedings are pending.

As we mark Mental Health Awareness Month, it is more crucial than ever that the U.S. uphold its commitment to fairness and equal access to justice under the law. We are unwavering in our commitment to the most vulnerable in our communities. We call on Congress to take a strong stand against this administration's attacks on due process and the most vulnerable among us by acting swiftly to reinstate this life-saving program.

Sincerely,

Acacia Center for Justice

Advocates for Immigrant Rights

Al Otro Lado

American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado

American Gateways

Americans for Immigrant Justice

Amica Center for Immigrant Rights

Amigos de Guadalupe Center for Justice and Empowerment

Asian Law Alliance

Asylum Clinic KC

Autistic People of Color Fund

Brentwood Christian Church

California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice (CCIJ)

California Immigration Project

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law

Centro Legal de la Raza

Children's Legal Center

Church World Service

Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (CLSEPA)

Congregation Action Network

Conklin Immigration Law, LLC

Cross Border Network for Justice & Solidarity

Deaf Equality

Disability Law United

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Disability Rights Legal Center

East Bay Community Law Center

East Bay Sanctuary Covenant

Estrella del Paso

Familias Unidas en Acción

Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project

Gregory Pleasants Law, APC

Haitian Bridge Alliance

Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef)

Immigrant Legal Defense

Immigration Center for Women and Children

Immigration Law & Justice Michigan

Immigration Law & Justice Network

Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy (ISLA)

International Mayan League

International Refugee Assistance Project

Just Detention International

Just Neighbors

Karen J. Doran, Attorney at Law

La Raza Community Resource Center

Latino Memphis, Inc.

Law Office of Andrew Nietor

Law Office of Daniela Hernandez Chong Cuy

Law Office of Helen Lawrence

Law Office of Jeffrey R. Boxer

Legal Services of New Jersey

Los Angeles County Public Defender's Union Local 148

LSN Legal LLC

Mariposa Legal

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)

Michigan Immigrant Rights Center

MK Law, LLC

Mountain State Justice

National Association for Rights Protection and Advocacy

National Korean American Service and Education Consortium (NAKASEC)

National Partnership for New Americans

New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Newman Hall Holy Spirit Non Violent Peacemaking Group Berkeley, Ca

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

Oasis Legal Services

Open Immigration Legal Services

Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center

Presente.org

Public Counsel

Public Defender Coalition for Immigrant Justice

Rights Behind Bars

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

Robin Potter, Attorney

Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network

Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)

Southern California Immigration Project

Southwest Detroit Immigrant and Refugee Center

Stratton Immigration

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC)

The Advocates for Human Rights

The Children's Partnership

The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy, and Innovation

The Law Office of Timothy J. Deffet

The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies

Unitarian Universalist Association

United Path Immigration Law Office

VECINA

Vera Institute of Justice

Washington Defender Association

World Relief Corporation of National Association of Evangelicals

Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights