

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**ALABAMA COALITION FOR IMMIGRANT JUSTICE
TO ADDRESS THE JOINT INTERIM PATRIOT IMMIGRATION COMMISSION
AT PUBLIC HEARING AT THE STATE HOUSE TOMORROW (OCT. 31) AT 1:00 P.M.**

Tomorrow, Alabama Appleseed will join other members of the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice (ACIJ) in addressing the Joint Interim Patriotic Immigration Commission at its first public hearing. "It is with great concern that the state-wide membership of ACIJ prepares their presentations. We trust that the Commission will hear our concerns and act accordingly, but above all justly and in a tenor that will benefit all Alabamians." -- Shay Farley, Advocacy Staff Associate - Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice.

Instead of considering punitive measures that detrimentally affect immigrant residents in Alabama, the Commission should be considering recommendations that will enable immigrants in Alabama to be productive and participating members of the communities in which they live and to Alabama as a whole.

"Our concern is that not only is the Commission attempting to address an issue at the state level that is exclusively the domain of the federal government, but it will also draw time and resources away from a host of other pressing concerns that greater merit the state's undivided attention, such as affordable housing, child welfare, and poverty." -- John Pollock, Attorney - Central Alabama Fair Housing Center

ACIJ advocates on behalf of the immigrant population of Alabama regardless of immigration status. We believe all persons deserve dignity and respect, and that the human rights and civil rights of all persons must be upheld. We believe that the increased focus on undocumented individuals could have a negative and potentially discriminatory effect on the entire Latino population.

"While the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama understands the frustrations at the state and local level concerning the impact of immigrants on our communities, immigration is a federal issue and should be dealt with as such. The Patriotic Immigration Commission should focus its energy on pressuring elected officials at the national level to continue the push for comprehensive immigration reform." -- Isabel Rubio, Executive Director -- Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama

We believe that any local or state bills or laws which, on their face or in enforcement, attempt to target, regulate, or discriminate against the immigrant community, will be struck down as unconstitutional on a variety of legal grounds. Such laws will only lead to costly legal challenges that will draw necessary resources away from legitimate state and local issues.

"The Southern Poverty Law Center calls on the Commission to take a humane and fair approach in conducting its analysis, and to recognize that there are serious constitutional limits on what a state can do to regulate immigration. Under our constitutional system, it is the responsibility of the federal government to address most policy issues associated with immigration. Alabama should take great care not to react to the influx of immigrants into our state by passing deeply flawed and illegal laws." -- Mary Bauer, Director, Immigrant Justice Project -- Southern Poverty Law Center

"Our national immigration system is broken, and as we wait for Congress to act it is understandable that the Commission is searching for local solutions. However, only the federal government can set our national immigration policy, and tinkering with it at the local level risks wreaking havoc on local residents who could suddenly be held to competing state and national standards. The Commission will do better to focus on how we can serve the common and inclusive needs of all Alabamians—like public health, education, housing, and crime prevention—and to demand that our elected representatives in Washington D.C. do their jobs by providing fair and meaningful reform to our national laws." -- Sam Brooke, Law Fellow -- American Civil Liberties Union of Alabama

We believe that immigrants provide substantial contributions to our state economy and society as a whole. They provide needed labor to many segments of our economy, including construction, forestry, landscaping, agricultural and various service-oriented industries, among others. They add to the rich diversity of cultures in Alabama, and thereby enrich our collective lives.

"We are all immigrants to this great country, just because one does not have "the papers" does not make them less of a human being. We have to be willing to understand each other to grow together. We have to be willing to respect each other to be strong together. Anti-immigrant movements that are not willing to understand or respect or even willing to listen to others will bring discord and division without progress. We have to work together for a just immigration process." -- John Ocampo, ALC, MEd, MS, MLAP, Chair, Alabama Alliance for Latino Health

****ACIJ's mission is to bring together various organizations and individuals from around the State to provide a unified voice to ensure the social, legal, and civic rights of immigrants in Alabama. Our members include: Alabama Alliance for Latino Health, Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, Inc., Alabama NOW, ACLU of Alabama, Be Latino, Birmingham Diocese, Catholic Social Services, Central Alabama Fair Housing Center, Greater Birmingham Ministries, Guadalupe Center, Hispanic Evangelical Pastors and Leaders of AL, Hispanic Interest Coalition of AL, Latinos Unidos de Alabama, Richco Services, Salvadorians Association of AL, and Southern Poverty Law Center; as well as individuals from around the State.**