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Meeting Date: September 09, 2025
Agenda Item No. 16
Batch No. 04

Letter of Support for Expanding the Immigrant Legal Defense Program

September 9, 2025

San Diego County Board of Supervisor
1600 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Members of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors,

Re: Support for the Expansion of the Immigrant Legal Defense Program (ILDP) to Include Unaccompanied Minors

I am writing on behalf of Singleton Schreiber LLP to express our strong support for the proposed expansion of the County's Immigrant Legal Defense Program (ILDP) to include unaccompanied minors. This initiative is crucial in ensuring that vulnerable children receive the legal representation they desperately need.

It is imperative that unaccompanied minors are made eligible for representation under the ILDP. These children often face complex legal challenges and require skilled advocacy to navigate the immigration system and related proceedings effectively. We also advocate for the recruitment of paralegals as ancillary service professionals. Their involvement will enhance the program's capacity to provide comprehensive support to unaccompanied minors.

When the ILDP was initially created, there it was already a federally funded federal funding supporting programs that supporting the Unaccompanied Children Program (UCP), which provided representation for to unaccompanied minors. Consequently, there was no immediate need to include minors in the County's program. However, the landscape has significantly changed. The Trump Administration's elimination of UCP that federal funding, despite a temporary extension through a bridge contract, has left these children in a precarious situation with no guarantee of continued support. This has forced oOrganizations that previously received that federal funding - like Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) – have been forced to close offices, leaving many minors without essential legal assistance.

The Any opposition to the expansion that is, based on the belief that federal funding should suffice, overlooks the reality that such funding is not forthcoming. Many unaccompanied minors are now attending San Diego schools and living within our community. These children, often bearing significant trauma, are in dire need of legal representation and social services. They cannot navigate the complex legal system alone, and without proper representation, they are at risk of unjust outcomes without proper legal representation.

Furthermore, unaccompanied minors are eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, which necessitates family or probate court orders. Not all immigration attorneys possess the expertise to handle these proceedings. A The County program is staffed with state-barred lawyers who can provide the comprehensive support these children require, ensuring they have advocates to guide them through the legal process.

The ILDP has already demonstrated its adaptability and commitment to universal representation by initially focusing on individuals in ICE DHS detention and subsequently expanding to include people those in criminal custody, border patrol custody, and those with who are subject to ICE detainers, and then people who are under alternative forms of supervision. or alternative programming. Extending this program to unaccompanied minors aligns with its mission to prioritize those in greatest need.

Thank you for considering our views on this important matter. We look forward to the positive impact this expansion will have on the lives of unaccompanied minors in our community.

Sincerely,
Singleton Schreiber, LLP