Statement of DC Immigrant, Faith, Racial Justice, and Civil Rights Organizations in Response to Sanctuary Values Emergency Amendment Act

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For Immediate Release
Contact: Jennifer Amuzie | jcamuzie@gmail.com | 912-996-2570
Julie Mao | juliemaolegal@gmail.com | 202-915-7745

Washington, D.C. — DC Council passed the Sanctuary Values Emergency Amendment Act of 2019 by unanimous vote. The Sanctuary Values Act emerged from a long grassroots effort led by immigrant communities affected by DC’s collaboration with ICE. Although this is an important first step taken by the Council to safeguard immigrant communities in DC, the coalition is disappointed that individuals detained by the U.S. Marshals were excluded from these key protections at the last minute.

We are deeply troubled that Mayor Bowser maneuvered behind the scenes to try to block the bill through the fiscal impact process. The Mayor’s resistance undermined efforts for a clean Sanctuary Values Act that would apply to all immigrants and led to the exceptions clause. We call on the Mayor to drop her opposition to a permanent version of the bill so that DC can become a true sanctuary for all immigrants.

For years, DC’s immigrant residents have been fighting to end DC’s complicity in ICE detentions and deportations, as many neighbors were detained, families fractured, and communities thrown into chaos and fear as a result of District agencies transferring residents to ICE. This coalition will continue to fight against immigrant criminalization in the District.
Rev. Peter Jarrett Schell from the Congregations Action Network stated, “We are keenly aware that this legislation leaves many DC residents at risk. We were hamstrung at the last minute, in a bad-faith effort from the Mayor’s office to sabotage this bill by technicality. The District profits by holding detainees on behalf of the Federal government. To protect those profits, the city government has left District residents vulnerable and exposed.”

“Today’s passing of the Sanctuary Values Amendment Act was a step forward for DC’s immigrant residents and the result of courageous efforts led by DC grassroots groups,” Julie Mao, Deputy Director of Just Futures Law, said. “At the same time, we know that our fight is just beginning to make sanctuary real in DC without exceptions or carve-outs. We are deeply troubled by the 11th hour attempts to scuttle the bill by Mayor Bowser and call on her to release all detention contracts supposedly requiring collaboration with ICE.”

“While we are encouraged that DC has taken an important step today with the (name of legislation), we are appalled that yet again, DC’s Mayor continues to stand in the way of DC truly becoming a Sanctuary City. In the process of moving forward positive legislation, it was revealed that DC has Intergovernmental Service Agreements with ICE to detain our friends and family members. We call on Mayor Bowser to renunciate any and all such agreements immediately and make ‘Sanctuary’ real!” Megan Macaraeg, Executive Director of Many Languages One Voice, added that “we’d like to thank the DC Council, especially Charles Allen and Brianne Nadeau, for their perseverance and vision in demanding real Sanctuary in DC.”

Alex Taliadoros, an organizer with Sanctuary DMV, said, “This is a strong bill that restricts DC agencies from sharing information with ICE, allowing ICE agents into the DC facilities, or holding individuals for ICE. We will fight for a permanent bill that extends these protections to the federal inmates in our DC Jail, too.”

Claudia Quinonez, an organizer with United We Dream DMV said, “Today’s vote on the Sanctuary Values Act of 2019 is an important step and we will continue to organize until not one single person is handed over to the deportation force. Home is here and the immigrant residents of Washington, D.C. deserve to live without fear of being separated from their loved ones.”

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