FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 1, 2020
Media Contact: Vera Parra| 917-519-7656| veraeparra@gmail.com

DC Council Holds Hearing On Permanent Sanctuary Values Act

Dozens of community members, faith leaders and advocates testified in favor of a permanent bill to end DC collaboration with ICE. If passed, the Sanctuary Values Act would permanently prohibit DC agencies from turning over its own residents to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for detention and deportation.

Impacted community members, faith leaders, immigrant rights groups, and other concerned DC residents joined a virtual city council hearing on Thursday in support of the Sanctuary Values Act. As a Sanctuary City, the DC Jail, Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), and DC Juvenile Detention Facility are ostensibly barred from cooperating with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). But local groups such as the ICE Out of DC Coalition note with great alarm that in practice DC Jail and MPD cooperate with ICE, turning over DC residents to the federal agency to be detained and deported. This creates a separate, harsher justice system for our undocumented neighbors. DC council passed a temporary version of the Sanctuary Values Act last year, but advocates and community members are calling for the council to address evidence of ongoing collaboration between ICE and DC agencies, and to pass a permanent version of the Sanctuary Values Act this fall.

"The Sanctuary Values Act is an important step in making DC a truly immigrant friendly city. DC has touted itself as a Sanctuary City despite still coordinating with ICE to transfer our residents over for detention and deportation," said Juliana Macedo do Nascimiento, a member of United We Dream DMV. "This bill would ensure our undocumented community is protected from the overreach and abuse of power ICE has been exerting with their unconstitutional holds and invalid administrative warrants. The DC City Council must pass the permanent Sanctuary Values Act and give all of our residents the protection and peace of mind they deserve to live full and dignified lives."

“The protests and uprisings this summer have further exposed how DC’s criminal legal system enacts violence against Black, brown, and indigenous communities. Ending our police and prison’s collaboration with a notoriously abusive DHS police force is a critical, first step to addressing DC’s criminal legal system,” said Julie Mao, an attorney with Just Futures Law.

“If the city passed a permanent Sanctuary Values Act, I would be without fear. Even though I have a Drivers’ License, I am scared because police racially profile and when they look at my license they see that I am undocumented. I have seen police abuse black and brown communities, and harass street vendors who are just working to put food on their tables,” said Ingrid Contreras, a spokesperson for Many Languages One Voice. “I deserve to live in a city without fear of driving, working, or losing my children.”
“As faith communities through the Congregation Action Network who act to end detention, deportation, profiling, and criminalization of immigrants, we stand in solidarity with neighbors whose life experiences have made it necessary to migrate for the security and often survival of their families. Especially now—as COVID continues to deepen inequities experienced by black and brown communities, as ICE agents have been deployed on our streets against protesters voicing those inequities, and as ICE has shown again recently on church grounds in neighboring Glenmont that it will use invasive tactics that break even their own rules against sensitive locations—we must uphold dignity, justice, and family unity by passing a permanent Sanctuary Values Act,” said Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Convenor, Congregation Action Network, DC and Director, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries.

The permanent version of the bill would prevent DC agencies, including those named above, from turning over DC residents to ICE for detention and deportation. The law would end cooperation between the DC government and ICE unless there is a judicial warrant. This means that DC agencies could no longer:

- Detain an individual for ICE.
- Release an individual to ICE.
- Share an individual’s location or release information with ICE.
- Give ICE agents access inside its jails and facilities.

It would be a much-needed measure to stop unequal treatment of immigrants that tears communities apart, bringing DC into alignment with its stated values as a Sanctuary City.

###

ICE Out of DC Coalition is an abolitionist, anti-racist, locally-led coalition of immigrant organizations, community groups, faith congregations, and service providers fighting for a DC that does not incarcerate, surveil, or deport but instead invests in the growth, health, and healing of its people. Organizational members include Calvary Episcopal Church, CARECEN, Congregation Action Network, DC Jobs With Justice, DIWA, Georgetown University Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor, Just Futures Law, Many Languages One Voice, Pan African Community Action, Sanctuary DMV, and United We Dream DMV.