

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: The Youth Justice Coalition strongly urges the city to adopt a robust universal representation fund in order to provide much needed defense in immigration court. Amidst the many changes that have come through the current administration, the need is ever the more the greater. As someone directly impacted by this issue, having legal support was essential. I became parentless at 16 and for lack of resources, I found my only support system in the streets which led to my arrest at 17. I was ultimately tried as an adult and sentenced to state prison. After earning early parole 16 years later, I was transferred to ICE custody on the day of my release. While others went home smiling and reuniting with family, I went to a journey unknown. In time, I would find my way out of immigrant jail since ICE was unable to physically deport me for lack of travel documentation to be sent overseas. When the documents were issued, I was taken back in and the community came to support me and offer itself as a resource. Fortunately, I made my way out again. Since that time, I have been working with young people to better our communities and was honored by Governor Brown with a pardon for that work. My residency status has now been restored and I continue to work with young people today. This would not have been possible without the YJC, the community, and the legal support from UCLA's criminal defense legal clinic alongside Immigrant Defenders. I and the YJC strongly urge the adoption of a universal representation fund. There are many young people in Los Angeles that come from homes with undocumented parents, many of whom have had contact with the criminal justice system and are subject to being arrested by ICE for deportation at any time. Our communities need these families in tact. Thank you.