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National Lawyers Guild Urges City of Sacramento Adopt Sanctuary Policy Thursday to 'Respect Dignity and Humanity' and 'Strengthen Our City'

SACRAMENTO, Ca. – The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) of Sacramento, in a letter to the Sacramento City Council members today, urged them to "adopt a sanctuary policy that is consistent with Sacramento's well-known progressive values." The council is expected to vote on the resolution Thursday.

Amreet Sandhu, J.D., board president of the Sacramento NLG Chapter, encouraged the Sacramento City Council to approve the May 4 resolution to "encourage this effort to respect the dignity and humanity of our community members and strengthen our City."

The letter in its entirety:

"The National Lawyers Guild was founded in 1937, and is the oldest and most extensive network of public interest and human rights activists working within the legal system. The National Lawyers Guild – Sacramento Chapter is proud to call the local community home. Many of its members live and work in the diverse communities that make up Sacramento City and the greater Sacramento County.

"We urge the City of Sacramento to adopt a sanctuary policy that is consistent with Sacramento's well-known progressive values. The concept of sanctuary is rooted in an ancient and biblically-based tradition wherein communities of faith have provided safety and respite to individuals who have been cast out by society.

"The present-day sanctuary movement in the United States came about in the 1980s, saved thousands of lives, and helped convince the U.S. government to recognize the refugee status of Central Americans fleeing death squads. Unfortunately, violence, economic conditions, and other factors continue to push people to flee their home nations, and seek refuge in the United States.

"There are both moral and practical reasons for implementing a sanctuary status in our local communities. In the early 2000s, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) began implementing policies to attempt to force local police to serve as immigration enforcement officers through 287(g) agreements and the Secure Communities (SCOM) program.

"As implementation of these policies led to innocent witnesses and victims of crime being deported -- including domestic violence survivors -- police departments saw a decrease in the willingness of immigrants to report any kind of crime in our communities. Recognizing that when local police are

seen as immigration officers, immigrants are afraid to report crime, more than 320 jurisdictions across the United States have limited their collaboration with ICE.

"Due to this community pushback across the country, as well as federal rulings that ICE's requests to detain individuals are unconstitutional without probable cause, SCOM was then replaced by the Obama Priority Enforcement Program. However, we now see a swing back to those old policies of the past, and again, members of our community are feeling pushed back into the shadows.

"It is vital for these individuals to know that they can go to the police for help, and for police to develop relationships with these communities. When all individuals can report dangerous situations without the fear of being deported and separated from their families, safety is increased for all community members. Policies that promote equal policing also help protect against racial profiling.

"We encourage the longstanding efforts that many cities and towns have made to foster trust between local law enforcement officers and all community members, regardless of their immigration status.

"Furthermore, the sanctuary policy up for vote in front of the council helps to protect the diversity of the city we choose to call home. This resolution celebrates our differences, respects the dignity of those who work in and contribute to our shared community, and makes us a stronger, more inclusive city. In short, it protects the community values we want to promote within Sacramento.

"We encourage the members of Sacramento's City Council to vote in favor of the sanctuary city resolution. We encourage this effort to respect the dignity and humanity of our community members and strengthen our City."

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The National Lawyers Guild, whose membership includes lawyers, legal workers, jailhouse lawyers, and law students, was formed in 1937 as the United States' first racially-integrated bar association to advocate for the protection of constitutional, human and civil rights.