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JUSTICE NEWS

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Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Justice Department Reaches Settlement with Houston Community College to Resolve Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices

The Justice Department announced today that it has reached an agreement with Houston Community College (HCC) resolving allegations that the college violated the anti-discrimination provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). HCC employs approximately 6,000 employees across 20 campuses and is one of the largest community colleges in the country.

The Justice Department’s investigation began after an individual filed a charge alleging that she was discriminated against in the hiring process. The department’s investigation revealed that for at least the last two years, HCC has engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination by requiring non-U.S. citizens to provide specific documentation establishing their work authority, while not making similar demands from U.S. citizens. The department did not find that the individual that filed the charge was herself a victim of the discriminatory practice.

Under the terms of the agreement, HCC will pay \$83,600 in civil penalties and agreed to abandon its prior department-based employment eligibility verification process in favor of a centralized verification process. HCC also agreed to create a \$20,000 back pay fund to compensate potential victims who lost wages as a result of the discriminatory practices, to undergo Justice Department training on the anti-discrimination provision of the INA and to be subject to monitoring of its employment eligibility verification practices for a period of two years. The case was handled by Trial Attorney Liza Zamd and settled prior to the Justice Department filing a complaint in this matter.

“Employers cannot create higher hurdles for non-U.S. citizens in the employment process, including the employment eligibility verification process, than those required of U.S. citizens or those required by law,” said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “We commend HCC for restructuring its hiring processes to ensure that it will no longer be treating new-hires differently based on their citizenship status.”

The Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices (OSC) is responsible for enforcing the anti-discrimination provision of the INA. For more information about protections against employment discrimination under the immigration laws, call the OSC’s worker hotline at 1-800-255-7688 (1-800-237-2525, TDD for hearing impaired), call the OSC’s employer hotline at 1-800-255-8155 (1-800-362-2735, TDD for hearing impaired), sign up for a no-cost webinar at www.justice.gov/about/osc/webinars.php, email oscrcrt@usdoj.gov or visit the website at www.justice.gov/crt/about/osc.

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Civil Rights Division

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