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El Paso Immigration Collaborative (EPIC) Seeks to Change the Asylum Landscape for Detained Immigrants

El Paso, TX – In response to the human rights crisis unfolding in the detention centers and courts at the U.S.-Mexican border, multiple local and national legal organizations have formed the El Paso Immigration Collaborative (EPIC). The collective’s goals are to advance the right to legal representation for detained immigrants and to provide sorely needed, increased oversight of the immigration courts and detention centers in and around El Paso.

Asylum denial rates for immigrants held in the massive detention centers in the El Paso region are among the highest in the United States. Asylum seekers detained in these facilities are victims of a due process disaster made worse by a dire shortage of lawyers that makes legal representation either unavailable or unaffordable for the vast majority of the 3,500 immigrants detained in the region. EPIC is marshalling the resources of its partner organizations to create a multi-faceted, data-driven campaign that coordinates the work of immigrant legal rights organizations in El Paso with thousands of remote legal volunteers across the United States to provide remote representation on bond and parole cases.

Linda Rivas, Executive Director of Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, said, “The tragic mass shooting in El Paso brought to light the anti-immigrant fervor simmering in our nation. As EPIC seeks to provide essential legal services to asylum seekers, we hope our work will help El Paso heal and fight back against hatred. Within El Paso’s detention and immigration court ecosystem, a vulnerable individual’s likelihood of release from detention or a granted asylum claim is essentially nil. In response, EPIC partners are bringing our resources to the table to fight

back against the deportation machine that has come to characterize the asylum process in El Paso. As organizations that work to increase representation rates and due process for detained immigrants, we know that access to counsel and a fair day in court can mean the difference between life and death for asylum seekers. By combining collaboration, innovative legal theory, and technology, we intend to transform El Paso from a jurisdiction nearly devoid of due process to one where justice abounds.”

EPIC currently involves members from the following organizations:

- Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center
- Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services
- Catholic Charities of Southern NM
- Santa Fe Dreamers Project
- PALS Program
- Innovation Law Lab
- American Immigration Council and American Immigration Lawyers Association’s Immigration Justice Campaign
- ACLU of Massachusetts' Immigrant Protection Project

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The El Paso Immigration Collaborative (EPIC) is an initiative between multiple national and local organizations which aims to increase access to counsel for detained immigrants in El Paso, Texas and transform the ecosystem of courts and detention centers in the region.