

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 29, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to express our support for sanctuary families living in houses of worship throughout Colorado. We believe you should use your legal authority to lift the deportation orders against Colorado's sanctuary leaders – Ingrid Encalada Latorre, Jeanette Vizguerra-Ramirez, Rosa Sabido, Sandra Lopez, and Arturo Hernandez Garcia – and exercise favorable discretion to grant stays of removal for these individuals so that they can keep their families intact, and be reunited with their neighbors and communities while Congress works with your administration on comprehensive immigration reform.

In response to the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, a growing number of congregations opened their doors to offer sanctuary to immigrants facing deportation, with dozens of individuals across the country taking refuge in places of worship as a last resort. Colorado has been no different – at one point having the most immigrants in church sanctuary than in any other state.¹ Individuals living in sanctuary have made great sacrifices to keep their families intact, and have been targets of retaliation and unable to participate in normal life outside of the confines of the church buildings. The situation has been no different for the Coloradans seeking sanctuary in our state.

Fleeing poverty, Ingrid Encalada Latorre, mother of three U.S.-citizen children, came to the United States in 2000 when she was 17 years old from Peru. She purchased a Social Security number, or a "chueco," in order to work, but did not know the number belonged to a real person. This mistake led to a conviction of criminal impersonation for using someone else's Social Security number, which she was later pardoned for in 2019 by Governor Jared Polis. Ingrid completed her terms of service, including restitution fees and back taxes, as well as started a public campaign called No Mas Chuecos to educate and inform others of the consequences of using false documents. Ingrid has lived in and out of sanctuary since November 2016 and for the last three years continuously. Ingrid currently lives in sanctuary at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder with her three U.S.-citizen children, ages 12, five, and 16 months.

Jeanette Vizguerra-Ramirez, a mother of four and grandmother of three, lives in sanctuary at the First Unitarian Society of Denver. Jeanette has lived without status in the United States since 1997, when she fled Mexico City after her husband was held up three times at gunpoint while working as a bus driver. Jeanette purchased what she thought was a fake Social Security card in order to find a third job and provide for her family but did not know that the number that she had invented actually belonged to a real person. She never actually used the number, but the fake documents

¹Jenn Fields, *Colorado Now Has More Immigrants in Church Sanctuary Than Any Other State*, The Denver Post (Oct. 25, 2017), <https://www.denverpost.com/2017/10/25/colorado-undocumented-immigrants-in-church-sanctuary/>.

were found when she was ticketed and arrested for having expired tags. As a result, she pled to a misdemeanor for attempted use of false documents in 2009. In May 2013, she was convicted of illegal entry after going back to Mexico for her mother's funeral. In response, Jeanette began a public campaign through Rights for All People to educate immigrants about their rights and to speak out against injustices in the immigration system. Jeanette is a longtime Colorado community activist, labor organizer, and business owner. Jeanette has four children – three U.S. citizens and one DACA recipient – and three U.S. citizen grandchildren. In 2017, Jeanette was named one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential people, because of her courage and willingness to come forward and publicly share her story.

Since June 2, 2017, Rosa Sabido has lived inside the Mancos United Methodist Church in Mancos, Colorado. Rosa, originally from Mexico City, first entered the U.S. in 1987; at age 23 she came with a visitor visa to see her mother and stepfather, then legal residents living in Colorado, and who later became U.S. citizens. After several trips between the two countries, Rosa has spent a majority of her life – over 30 years – in the United States, many of those years with valid employment authorization based on pending immigration applications, holding a variety of jobs including at H&R Block doing tax preparation, as a housekeeper at a hotel, and as a secretary at St. Margaret Mary Church. Rosa has cooked and sold food to supplement her income becoming renown in and around Cortez, Colorado for her tamales. In sanctuary, Rosa had to grieve; she was unable to see or care for her mother Blanca as she fought breast cancer for six months and passed away on July 23, 2018. Rosa tirelessly advocates for others and for humane immigration reform.

Sandra Lopez, mother of three U.S.-citizen children, took sanctuary in October 2017 at the Two Rivers Unitarian Universalist congregation in Carbondale. Sandra lived in sanctuary for 10 months before ICE told her she was not a priority for deportation. Sandra was arrested in 2010 after one of her children dialed 911 following an argument between her and her husband. At the time of Lopez's arrest, Colorado SB-90, which has since been repealed, mandated that police officers report any person to ICE if the officer suspected that person to be in the United States without lawful status. In spite of there being no accusation or evidence of domestic violence, Sandra was arrested on domestic violence charges and reported to ICE. All charges were immediately dropped, but Sandra was placed in removal proceedings. Sandra's case is still unresolved.

Arturo Hernandez Garcia and his family have lived in Colorado for more than 20 years. He is a husband and father of two daughters—the older born in Mexico and the youngest born in the United States—and a small business owner. Arturo took sanctuary in 2014 at First Unitarian Church in Denver for nine months. In 2015, ICE sent him a letter indicating he was no longer an enforcement priority; however, in 2017, he was unexpectedly detained by ICE at his workplace. He later received a two-year stay of deportation that expired in March of 2019.

Ingrid, Jeanette, Rosa, Sandra, and Arturo have lived in Colorado for decades, enriching our economy and adding value to our communities, and should not have been a priority for deportation. To that end, we believe your administration should use its discretion to provide stays of removal to Ingrid Encalada Latorre, Jeanette Vizguerra-Ramirez, Rosa Sabido, Sandra Lopez, and Arturo Hernandez Garcia. Doing so would help keep families together and provide stability and hope for a small number of immigrants as we work with your administration on comprehensive immigration reform with the goal of creating a more fair and moral immigration system.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with your administration.

Sincerely,



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress