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FOR RELEASE AT WILL

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**NEW FEDERAL ACTION WOULD CUT OFF DUE PROCESS PROTECTIONS FOR
NEWLY ARRESTED IMMIGRANTS**

A just-announced “pause” in current United States Department of Justice grants to legal aid organizations around the country, effective April 30, will end provision of legal rights information to individuals newly arrested by the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, commonly known as ICE. The move would cut off in mid-year a \$285,000 grant to Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), the sole organization offering such legal rights information to detainees in New Jersey.

“From our experience at least 85% of those attending our legal rights presentations have been NJ residents,” explained Raquiba Huq, Chief Attorney of LSNJ’s Immigration Representation Project. “Most have at least one family member in the state.”

“In 2017, 2,996 people were detained and placed into removal proceedings in NJ,” Huq elaborated. “Of these, 40% continued in detention, with the remainder released on bond pending their removal proceeding. Under the federal grant, within a few days of their detention LSNJ provided basic information on their legal and procedural rights to 2,051 detainees in 2017 - all those who asked for it and 70% of the total new detainees for the year.”

At any given time there are 1,000 to 1,200 people detained under ICE custody in NJ. They are held at the Elizabeth Detention Center and in Essex and Hudson County correctional facilities.

“Simple explanation of their legal rights is the most basic element of the fundamental fairness – due process – that should be afforded anyone suddenly arrested and incarcerated in the United

States,” declared Melville D. Miller, Jr., president of LSNJ. “These arrests and detentions are all taken under the explicit, sole authority of federal law. To suddenly tear these people from their families, and then without justification or notice abruptly suspend the very program that offers them some level of guidance and hope, is cruel, unwarranted and an affront to American values.”

“We hope that nationally voices of criticism will lead to an early reversal of this decision,” Miller stated. “In the meantime, LSNJ will seek every means within its power to continue this work and provide the information. In humanity and decency, we can do no less.”

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state’s Legal Services system, a network of five independent non-profit corporations and has been providing free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people through offices in all 21 counties for more than 50 years. Since its inception, LSNJ has provided representation in more than 2.4 million cases.