

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Immigrant Families in PA Will Organize to Protect Their Communities**

*Pennsylvania*— Today immigrant and refugee families wake up to a President-Elect who has publicly declared their contempt for immigrant and refugee communities. Last night's election results are a sad reminder that we still have a long way to go to realize the promise of the American Dream. Our communities are now faced with the very real possibility that legislators will unite around policies that will target and criminalize people based solely on religion and country of origin.

PICC and our member organizations will not sit by and let local, state, or federal elected officials push forward anti-immigrant and anti-refugee policies. Whether it is an attempt to build a wall or ban refugees or overturn hard-won local policies, we will stand together against racism and xenophobia, and fight for the vision of America we believe in: inclusive, welcoming, and diverse.

This year PICC led a statewide effort to register New Americans to vote, and ensure that they were able to make it to the polls on Tuesday. Collectively, members of the Immigrant Voter Project registered over 5,000 new voters, and called over 10,500 New American voters about the election. Now we will build on that momentum to ensure that immigrant and refugee communities have a powerful voice at the local, state and national level.

“The few advances made under the prior Administration were because immigrant communities organized and stood up to demand they be treated with dignity and respect,” says Sundrop Carter, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition. “Regardless of the outcome of this election, immigrant and refugee communities were prepared to continue organizing for more just policies. This election shows just how important it is that we work together and fight for each other.”

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*The [Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition \(PICC\)](#) is a diverse coalition of 50 member organizations and hundreds of individual members. Our membership includes grassroots community groups, service providers, unions, advocacy organizations, faith communities, immigrants and concerned individuals. Our mission is to advance immigrants' rights and promote immigrants' full integration into society by advocating with a unified voice for greater public understanding and welcoming public policies throughout Pennsylvania.*

Paula Meninato

" A progressive change is better than a destructive change. Calling people to make sure they vote is not easy, but we gathered our courage and successfully called hundreds of voters in Harrisburg."

Tika Dhungana, the founding President of Bhutanese Community in Harrisburg

"ACLAMO proudly stands with PICC to bring nonpartisan information and education to new voters as they were excited to cast their first vote during this presidential election. Voting is a privilege and we wanted to make sure voters understood their rights and responsibilities before going to the polls", said Nelly Jimenez-Arevalo, ACLAMO Executive Director.

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"Bhutanese Americans all across the states have had their first voting experience in a democracy. It was a moment of great pride and a sense of belonging to our new country and we did our best to demonstrate our civic duty and voted to protect democracy and freedom."

Upendra Dahal, Project Manager

Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh.

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First time voting: After living in this country for 14 years, it's a pleasure to finally be a citizen and be able to vote in a presidential election. The process was easy and I'm thankful to have avoided a long line. My only complaint would be that I wish we had more choices to pick from.

Next steps & Organizing: Regardless of what candidates are elected, we need to keep pushing for better policies.

Our current political system is designed to enforce power structures that disproportionately benefit rich white men while oppressing communities of color. It's essential for immigrants to unite and fundamentally change our federal immigration reform so everyone can have a chance at success. Increasing voter turnout among immigrant communities is essential to achieving this goal because it sends a strong message to our representatives. If they understand that they need our votes to secure seats in public office, they will either think twice about attacking immigrant communities or they will support our communities.

Finally, an intersectional understanding of how all social justice issues relate is essential to achieving a just society. A third of our global population has none or limited access to clean water due to environmental issues such as drought or water

pollution. While privileged individuals can discuss climate change as an issue that will affect them in the future, people in marginalized communities are dying and suffering extreme consequences because of environmental destruction. I was exposed to this reality in my home country of Argentina, where entire families sort through recyclables for a living because they have no opportunity. Many of these families then travel long, dangerous journeys in order to live in the US without papers.

This is just one example of how immigration intersects with another social justice issue. Moving forward, I believe we need to re-frame discussions around social justice issues because addressing one issue without the other is not enough. We need to move forward in solidarity.