

Statement Regarding Legal Orientation Program

Yesterday, Vera learned the Department of Justice is halting our Legal Orientation Program (LOP) as of April 30th. LOP serves more than 50,000 people per year in 38 large detention centers and ensures that all immigrants in detention are provided with the essential information they need to navigate our complex legal system. LOP empowers program participants to represent themselves if they have a valid claim under existing law or to determine that their best course is to accept deportation.

The program, created in 2003 under President George W. Bush, is a lifeline for many immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and green-card holders --some who are fighting for their lives--who would otherwise not know the rights they have or the odds they face. LOP saves lives. Every day this program is not in operation puts family unity at risk, harms our communities, and infringes on the right of all people to make informed decisions about their legal claims.

In addition, LOP has had unquestionably positive effects on the immigration court process and terminating it would be fiscally irresponsible. The Department of Justice concluded in a 2012 study that this essential work is a cost-effective and efficient way to promote due process and cut through the large backlog of cases, the most significant issue facing the immigration courts today. The same study found that the program created a net savings for the government of nearly \$18 million--meaning, every \$1 the government spent on LOP saved \$4. This is why LOP has had strong support in Congress, which maintained its full funding in FY 2018.

Vera remains committed to providing critical legal services to immigrant communities and their families and will continue our work to ensure that all people are given their right to justice.

<https://www.vera.org/newsroom/press-releases/statement-regarding-legal-orientation-program>