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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **VICTORY: Detained Families Triumph Over Trump Administration Policies**

**Dilley, Texas and Reading, Pennsylvania** -- This weekend, the final five families subjected to indefinite detention based under Trump's unlawful policies barring asylum were freed from jails that detain families in Dilley, Texas and Berks, Pennsylvania. Some of these children had been unnecessarily detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for more than 18 months at the time of their release. They are now en route to loving homes, where they will reside with their family and continue with their immigration cases.

Over the last year more than 200 mothers, fathers and children have now emerged ***free and together*** from immigration detention since the Trump administration embarked on a lawless attempt to prevent children and parents from lawfully seeking asylum in the United States, beginning in the Summer of 2019.

In May 2020, many of these parents were asked by ICE to *consent* to separate from their children in order to permit their children to leave detention, alone, without their mother or father. They were encouraged to *separate from their children to avoid physical harm* from the COVID-19 virus raging in ICE detention centers. Faced with an impossible choice, no family chose to "give up" their child. In the end, each family remained detained together, trusting in God and a system that is supposed to protect them. Now, they are free and together.

Proyecto Dilley and Aldea - The People's Justice Center, along with litigation partners, challenged every unlawful policy levied against the more than 200 mothers, fathers and children who had been detained at the South Texas Family Residential Center and the Berks County Residential Center. The Administration's attempts to bar asylum access included blocking children from age one to 17 from the international human right to seek asylum. A lawful right. Each family was then subjected to indefinite detention, ranging from 10 months to nearly two years.

While many of their legal challenges will continue, the detention of these children and their parents will not. They are all now free and together and will continue to fight for the ability to stay safe in the United States, as is their legal right, before Federal Courts and the Immigration Courts. On-the-ground legal service providers continuously fought for the protection of each and every family through litigation

and continuous advocacy with the Asylum office, efforts supported by Members of Congress, organizations both local and nationwide, and the community.

Our organizations will continue to provide universal support to families that suffer in detention in the United States and will work to keep families together - until such time as the Biden Administration finally does the right thing, and ends the abhorrent practice of family detention.

The families expressed their gratitude to be safe, free, and together. We, their advocates and lawyers, credit their resilience in the face of a powerful U.S. Government working against them.

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**Aldea - The People's Justice Center** provides quality pro bono legal and social services to vulnerable detained and free immigrant populations throughout Pennsylvania, and offers universal pro bono representation to every family detained by ICE in the state. Aldea also participates in important and impactful litigation nationwide to protect immigrant children and their families. Aldea is working to free the families currently in ICE detention.

**Proyecto Dilley** - Proyecto Dilley provides free legal services to asylum-seeking mothers and children who are detained at the largest ICE detention facility in the country, the South Texas Family Residential Center. Proyecto Dilley represents every family that is detained in Dilley, Texas and is fighting to keep families together and safe from COVID-19 through direct representation and impact litigation.