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October 4, 2023

Honorable Andrew Joyce
Chair, Albany County Legislature
112 State Street, Room 700
Albany, NY 12207

Dear Chairman Joyce:

The Office of Immigration Assistance (OIA) requests authorization to accept \$1,654,260 for a three-year grant to establish a Regional Immigration Assistance Center in Region #3 for the New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services.

In 2015, the New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services awarded Albany County a three-year contract to create and maintain the OIA's one hundred percent state-funded Regional Immigration Assistance Center for Region #3(RIAC). OIA subsequently opened the RIAC in April 2016. Since its inception, the RIAC has provided indigent providers with legal support, assistance, training, and education within the designated fourteen-county region. The RIAC aims to improve the overall quality of mandated representation afforded to indigent, non-citizen clients in criminal and family courts.

The OIA requests authorization to accept a three-year award totaling \$1,654,260.

The RIAC must maintain its operation for several reasons:

- (1) The RIAC continues to conduct training at public defender offices across Region 3 on the intersection of Immigration, Criminal, and Family Law. The training aims at enduring continued quality representation of non-citizens in criminal and family court proceedings. We continue to receive training requests to conduct these trainings.
- (2) The need exists for RIACs to advise public defender offices on criminal and family court cases affecting non-citizens across Region 3, and therefore, must make all efforts to remain open.
- (3) The RIAC collaborates with and continues to develop partnerships with community allies involved in immigration work in the Capital Region and beyond.

- (4) Due to increased enforcement of laws within Region 3, the RIAC must remain open to continue offering guidance to court-mandated attorneys as they assist their non-citizen clients in criminal and family court.
- (5) The office is 100% funded by this grant.

Based on the preceding, we respectfully request that the Albany County Legislature approve the request for authorization to accept funding so we may take every step to continue providing legal support and assistance.

Very truly yours,

Evelyn A. Kinnah, Esq.
Director

Cc: Dennis Feeney, Majority Leader
Frank Mauriello, Minority Leader
Rebekah Kennedy, Majority Counsel
Arnis Zilgme, Minority Counsel