

Sapelo Foundation Releases Report on Immigration Enforcement and Its Impact on Latino Children in Georgia

Troubling first hand accounts and interviews with parents and children negatively impacted by 287(g) immigration laws in Gwinnett and Cobb Counties highlighted

Domestic violence also a serious problem as women and their children are scared to report abuses and seek help from law enforcement for fear of deportation

Report details suggestions for local immigration enforcement and child welfare policy reform recommendations

Report urges our nation's policymakers and leaders to enact comprehensive immigration reform in light of report's findings

June 22, 2010, Atlanta, GA --- The Sapelo Foundation released a report today documenting the impact of immigration enforcement on children and women who are victims of domestic violence in Georgia by interviewing more than 45 stakeholders over a three month period. The report can be viewed in its entirety at <http://www.sapelofoundation.org/immigration2.pdf>.

Five law enforcement agencies are currently participating in the 287(g) program in Georgia. According to the Department of Homeland Security, since 2009 a record number of deportations occurred across the country, an increase of 13% from 2008. Based on the report's findings, in over 70% of the cases collected, families were separated due to immigration enforcement efforts. The report highlights a number of stories, including firsthand accounts, detailing the traumatizing impact that immigration enforcement has on the health, education and lives of children in Georgia. These stories include the following:

- Luis was a homeless, honors high-school student in Cobb County, Georgia. His story fully illustrates the harmful and life-altering impact of the interplay between "zero tolerance" policies in the educational**

system and immigration enforcement. The school found a tool from one of Luis' two after-school jobs in his backpack when conducting a search of students' bookbags. Based on the state's zero tolerance law, the school reported Luis to the police. He was taken into custody and transferred to a federal detention center. Luis was recently deported.

- Eva's son was having an asthma attack during school. After the school nurse contacted her, Eva left work immediately. She did not have identification to show the school staff and was permitted to bring her son home only after the nurse and bilingual school advocate intervened. When Eva was about to pull into her apartment complex with her son, the police (who were contacted by the school and followed her home) stopped Eva, handcuffed her in front of her son and told her to leave her son with a neighbor. Her son was not given medical attention and was traumatized by this inexplicable incident.

In addition, undocumented women involved in domestic violence situations find themselves in hopeless circumstances, with no safe alternative other than to live with abuse. Accounts include the following:

- Teresa experienced violence from her husband for 15 years, often-times life-threatening. Teresa's daughter Lydia grew up in an atmosphere of constant violence but learned to never call the police because of fear of deportation of her entire family.
- Isabel has been a sexual slave to her husband for years and is in an abusive relationship but is fearful of reporting her husband's ongoing abuse to local authorities (based on her and her daughter's immigration status).
- Marta's schizophrenic husband has been abusive for many years, and he has gone as far as locking her children in the basement. He was eventually diagnosed as schizophrenic. Marta now wants to receive assistance but is fearful of driving without a license and getting stopped and deported because of her immigration status.

The Sapelo report also provides a list of recommendations and a call for comprehensive immigration policy reform. Some examples of local law enforcement and child welfare policy reform recommendations are listed below but the full list can be viewed in the Sapelo Foundation report at <http://www.sapelofoundation.org/immigration2.pdf> :

- **State and local law enforcement agencies should adopt guidelines that strictly prohibit stationing checkpoints and road blocks near schools, churches, day care centers and health clinics.**
- **Law enforcement officers deputized under the 287(g) program should receive specific training in cultural competency and how to handle arrests where a minor child is present so as to minimize trauma to the child.**
- **Community groups, legal service providers, lawyers and all others working with the community should continue to engage in public education campaigns to assist families to prepare powers of attorney and other appropriate documents to ensure their children have trusted adults who are legally authorized to make decisions on behalf of their children in the event that a parent is detained and/or deported.**

For more information about the report, access to some of the individuals interviewed, and comments from individuals with subject matter expertise, please contact Jerry Gonzalez, Executive Director of Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials at 404/745-2580 or jerry@galeo.org. The white paper was researched and written by Elise Shore, Esq., Legal Consultant to the Sapelo Foundation for the report, and she may be contacted for comments about this report at 678/538-9820 or EliseShoreEsq@gmail.com.

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About the Sapelo Foundation:

The Sapelo Foundation believes that maintaining a high quality of life in Georgia requires an engaged citizenry and a government that is responsible to the needs of the people. The increasing diversity of Georgia presents the state with numerous opportunities and challenges. At the same time there is a continuing need to work on breaking down long held beliefs and stereotypes that are based on race, gender, and poverty, and are barriers to mutual trust and respect.

The foundation believes that the development of sound public policy is critical to effective government and the empowerment of the citizenry. Therefore, it is the aim of the Foundation to strengthen representative democracy in Georgia through efforts that educate the public about government institutions and policies, promote civic engagement and responsibility, and monitor government performance.