



Seattle City Council

March 28, 2016

Billy J. Williams
U.S Attorney's Office
District of Oregon
1000 SW 3rd Avenue, Suite 600
Portland, OR 97204

Re: Juan Francisco Aguirre Velasquez Case No. 14-cr-00400-JO

Dear U.S Attorney Billy J. Williams,

As Seattle City Councilmembers, we are writing to ask you to give full and fair consideration of Francisco Aguirre's case before you. We understand Mr. Aguirre's trial will be on April 19, 2016. Based on information given to us, constitutional issues about his original deportation in 2000 have been raised.

We have been asked by constituents to urge you to drop the charges against him, allowing Mr. Aguirre to stay in Portland, Oregon with his wife and two children, both of whom are U.S. citizens. We urge you to give these concerns your renewed attention.

Mr. Aguirre is an El Salvadoran immigrant and valued member of the immigrant community, not only in Portland, but in Seattle as well. He has worked for many years at the VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project, where he has fought on behalf of low-wage workers and immigrant day laborers. Through his efforts, Mr. Aguirre has helped countless immigrant workers recover hundreds of thousands of dollars in stolen wages, while empowering them to get organized and fight for higher wages and safer working conditions.

More than 100 immigrant rights, labor, faith, and civil rights organizations have joined in calling on the Department of Justice to drop the charges against Mr. Aguirre. We understand Mr. Aguirre was charged in November 2014 for unlawful re-entry into the United States, but questions have been raised about the constitutionality of his deportation in the first place.

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales has also expressed support, calling Mr. Aguirre, "an important community leader whom I respect." Here in Seattle, immigrant and workers' rights groups, Casa Latina, El Centro de la Raza, and El Comité have also advocated on Mr. Aguirre's behalf.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that more than 900,000 immigrants live in Washington State, approximately 230,000 of which are undocumented according to the Pew Hispanic Center Report. A 2012 American Community Survey found that 118,012 foreign born residents live in Seattle, of which 56,135 are not U.S. citizens. As Seattle implements its \$15 minimum wage, organizers like Mr. Aguirre have an essential role to play in fighting against wage theft and labor violations, which we know are widespread among immigrant populations, especially undocumented immigrants. Deporting Mr. Aguirre will have a chilling effect on thousands of immigrants and their families, making it harder for organizations like Casa Latina, El Centro de la Raza, and El Comité to protect these workers' basic human rights.

Our support for Mr. Aguirre follows logically from the City of Seattle policy established on July 30, 2014 when the City Council passed Resolution 31539, "prioritizing family unity and urging President Obama and Congress to replace the enforcement oriented federal immigration system with an immigration policy that keeps families together and respects the

City Hall, 600 Fourth Avenue, Floor 2, PO Box 34025, Seattle, Washington 98124-4025
(206) 684-8888 Fax: (206) 684-8587 TTY: (206) 233-0025

<http://www.seattle.gov/council>

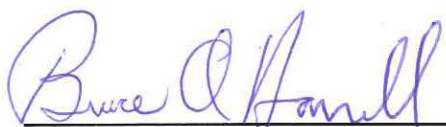
An EEO employer. Accommodations for people with disabilities provided upon request.

rights of all workers to support their families.” The Resolution was passed in the context of the ongoing wave of violence in Mexico and Central America, which has continued forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes, including 106,738 unaccompanied children from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico in 2014 and 2015 alone, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

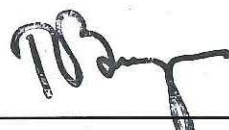
This violence has impacted Francisco Aguirre in the most tragic way possible. His 17 year old son Denis Moises Escalante Aguirre was murdered on February 2, 2016, just months after returning to El Salvador. As a matter of basic human decency, the charges against Mr. Aguirre should be dropped so his family can remain together to grieve over their loss and rebuild their lives. Reports that Denis Moises was killed by hired assassins are proof that Mr. Aguirre’s life would be in danger if he were deported and forced to return to El Salvador.

For the reasons listed above, as Seattle City Councilmembers, we urge you, the U.S. Attorney’s office, and the Department of Justice to drop the charges against Francisco Aguirre, allowing him to stay with his wife and three children in Portland, Oregon.


Sincerely,


Council President Bruce A. Harrell


Councilmember Sally Bagshaw


Councilmember Tim Burgess


Councilmember M. Lorena González


Councilmember Lisa Herbold


Councilmember Rob Johnson


Councilmember Debora Juarez


Councilmember Mike O'Brien


Councilmember Kshama Sawant

600 Fourth Avenue, Floor 2, PO Box 34025, Seattle, Washington 98124-4025

(206) 684-8888 Fax: (206) 684-8587 TTY: (206) 233-0025

Internet Address: <http://www.cityofseattle.gov/council>

An EEO employer. Accommodations for people with disabilities provided upon request.