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Lane County Community Groups Sue to End Illegal Collaboration of Cottage Grove Police with Federal Immigration Agents

Cottage Grove, OR – On February 21, two Lane County community organizations filed a lawsuit in Lane County Circuit Court against the City of Cottage Grove for the police department’s violations of the Sanctuary Promise Act by illegally providing assistance to federal immigration officials seeking to deport community members.

The Rural Organizing Project (ROP) and Community Alliance of Lane County (CALC) allege that policies, customs, and actions of the Cottage Grove Police Department violate the Sanctuary Promise Act by:

- Detecting and taking people into custody for immigration enforcement
- Notifying immigration officials of people in local custody who police believe are violating federal immigration law
- Giving immigration officials access to people it is detaining in restricted areas of the Cottage Grove Jail
- Sharing confidential information with immigration officials about people in its custody, including release dates, contact information, and personal data

These practices illegally divert local resources to assist federal officials in enforcing immigration laws against refugees and immigrants, which erodes community trust in police and tears families apart.

ROP and CALC are asking the Court for a judgment declaring that Cottage Grove is violating the Sanctuary Promise Act and an injunction ordering it to comply with the Act.

“When local police don’t follow the law and collaborate with federal immigration enforcement, it breaks community trust, making it less likely that people will call for help when needed, making everyone less safe,” says Jess Campbell, Executive Director of ROP. “We want the City of Cottage Grove to follow the law. Everyone has the right to live their lives with safety and dignity in Oregon.”

“Oregonians have overwhelmingly supported our state’s sanctuary laws that separate local, county, and state police from federal immigration enforcement for more than 30 years,” says Campbell. “Local law enforcement agencies should be focusing their resources on local priorities, not supporting a multi-billion dollar federal agency.”

ROP and CALC are represented by the Oregon Law Center (OLC), a statewide, non-profit law firm. Their attorneys are Amy Scott from OLC’s Lane County Office, MariRuth

Petzing and Mark Bowers from OLC's Portland Regional Office, and David Henretty from OLC's Statewide Support Unit.

Those who learn that law enforcement or other agencies may be unlawfully aiding federal immigration officials can report information or incidents to the Oregon Department of Justice Sanctuary Promise Hotline at 1-844-924-STAY (1-844-924-7829) or Spanish Direct Line: 1-844-626-AMPARO (1-844-626-7276.)

Rural Organizing Project (ROP) is a nonprofit organization based in Cottage Grove that has been working for 30 years to advance democracy and human dignity in Rural Oregon by supporting local community groups. Learn more about their work at rop.org.

Community Alliance of Lane County (CALC) is a nonprofit organization based in Eugene, Oregon. CALC's mission is to promote human rights and dignity through grassroots mobilization of communities to hold public institutions accountable to all their constituents, especially those who are often marginalized and underrepresented. CALC has long supported immigrant and refugee communities. Learn more about CALC at calclane.org.

Oregon Law Center (OLC) is a non-profit organization that provides free legal help to people struggling to make ends meet. The mission of the Oregon Law Center is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. More information can be found at oregonlawcenter.org.