



Esperanza Immigration
Legal Services



2026 IMPACT REPORT

ROOTED IN RESILIENCE



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A Message From Our Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

There is no gentle way to describe the year our communities have lived through. Immigration enforcement has intensified. Fear has become a daily companion for families who have called Philadelphia and its surrounding counties home for years, sometimes decades. Parents have had to explain to their children what to do if they don't come home from work. Longtime neighbors have disappeared from church pews and school pickup lines.

And yet, in the middle of all of it, something else has been true: you showed up.

Because of your support, Esperanza Immigration Legal Services (EILS) did not have to choose between keeping our doors open and keeping our promise to the people who walk through them. We kept both. Thank you — not as a formality, but because it is the plain truth of how we made it through this year.

Why This Work Matters Now

Immigrant rights are not an abstraction in our work — they are the difference between a family staying together or being torn apart, between a worker being protected by law or exploited in silence, between a person having their day in court or being removed without ever being heard. Every person we represent is entitled to due process, to dignity, and to a fair chance to make their case. In a political climate that too often treats immigrants as problems to be managed rather than people to be served, that basic proposition — that everyone deserves competent legal representation — has become something we have to actively defend, not just practice.

Where We're Going

We know that need in the Latino community — across Philadelphia and into the neighboring counties — far outstrips what we can currently provide. Too many people still cannot find affordable, trustworthy legal representation within a reasonable distance of home. Too many go into immigration court alone, facing a system that is adversarial by design, without anyone in their corner.

Our strategic priorities for the year ahead are built around closing that gap:

- **Expand direct representation capacity**, so more families — not just in Philadelphia but in the surrounding counties where Latino communities are growing and legal resources are thinner — can access an attorney rather than face the system alone.
- **Deepen partnerships** with churches, schools, consulates, and community-based organizations so that people know we exist before a crisis forces them to look for us.
- **Strengthen know-your-rights education**, so that entire communities — not just our clients — understand what protections they have and how to exercise them.
- **Build long-term sustainability**, so that our ability to say yes to a family in need never depends on a single grant cycle or a single hard year.

None of this happens without you. What you supported this year was not just casework — it was the belief that people deserve a fighting chance to plant roots and thrive.

Thank you for standing with immigrant families when it counted most. We have more work ahead of us, and we are honored to keep doing it alongside you.

With gratitude and resolve,



Ann Thomas

EILS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Message From Board Chair

It has been one year since I became Chairman of the Board of Directors of EILS. During that time, we set ambitious goals and reached an important milestone. Thanks to the generosity of our grantors, donors and volunteers, together with the tireless commitment of our Board, Executive Director and staff, we achieved the most successful fundraising year in our history. Those resources allowed us to hire an additional attorney, expanding our capacity to provide high-quality, free legal services to low-income immigrants across the Philadelphia region.

We are deeply grateful for this extraordinary support. Every contribution helps ensure that individuals and families have access to competent legal representation as they navigate an increasingly complex immigration system. As an immigrant myself, I experienced those challenges firsthand, even before recent policy and regulatory changes added new layers of complexity. I deeply empathize with the families in our community who, in pursuit of a better future for themselves and their children, must navigate this legal system with limited resources.

Our mission remains unchanged: to unlock opportunities for lower-income immigrants to live safely, contribute fully to their communities and participate openly in society. We do this by providing free legal representation to eligible individuals seeking lawful immigration status, including naturalization, permanent residency, asylum-related filings, work authorizations and DACA renewals, as well as education and advocacy. By helping people understand and navigate the legal system, we strengthen families, promote compliance with the law, and build a stronger, more resilient community.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to meeting this moment with compassion, professionalism, and fiscal responsibility. We will continue to steward every dollar wisely, expand our network of supporters and pursue sustainable resources so that no eligible individual is denied access to justice because they cannot afford an attorney.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your trust, your generosity and your belief that equal access to justice strengthens our entire community.

Message From Esperanza Founder & CEO

Every year brings a myriad of challenges for those individuals facing immigration issues. In the past, while the system was often convoluted, there were still pathways to navigate on behalf of those in need of support.

Today, the landscape has shifted. Policies and practices have made it significantly more difficult for many, including individuals who already possess valid legal documentation, yet find their status questioned or disregarded.

The moral imperative of this work remains clear. We must continue to focus on helping as many individuals as possible in their pursuit of securing and maintaining legal status.

We are deeply grateful to our supporters. Your contributions make it possible for hundreds of individuals and families to persevere and survive in the face of these challenges.



Gonzalo Cornejo

EILS BOARD CHAIR



Rev. Luis Cortes

FOUNDER & CEO ESPERANZA

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PENNSYLVANIA IOLTA
PHILADELPHIA BAR FOUNDATION
PHILADELPHIA FOUNDATION
UNIDOS US

*Empowering Change,
One Step at a Time*

20 Data 26 Snapshot



3000+

individuals successfully
reached across 5 regions with
representation, education &
referrals



40+

community education & KYR
programs implemented
successfully



\$446K+

in-kind valuation of pro bono
support from corporate law
firms

Legal Support



240+

legal immigration applications focusing on
naturalization, asylum, work authorization,
FOIAs, renewals, and humanitarian relief

360 legal screenings
conducted

13 citizenship &
asylum clinics
facilitated

Volunteer Support

115

attorneys, law students,
advocates & language support

1020

hours committed

KYR Infosessions

40

In-person &
online sessions

29+

Organizational
Partners

3071+

Community
Participants

Financial Reporting

\$550K Total Revenue

 **51%**
Individual/corporate giving

 **49%**
Institutional giving

20 Advocacy 26 Efforts

*Empowering Change,
One Step at a Time*



Legislation

EILS, along with other members of the Pennsylvania Immigration Coalition (PIC), provided testimony in support of Philadelphia City Council's seven-bill "ICE Out" package passed in May 2026, restricting federal immigration enforcement and collaboration within the city.



Rights Education

To better prepare & protect immigrants, EILS provided rights education to hundreds of community members and over 40+ organizations serving immigrants including schools, universities, congregations, restaurants, non-profit agencies, and more.



Information Access

EILS partnered with Impacto newspaper to produce two bilingual (Spanish & English) state-wide editions, providing thousands of community members with comprehensive rights & resource information.



Research

In partnership with Temple Law, EILS conducted a research project studying the immigration legal needs of Latino communities in Philadelphia. The findings will determine strategic expansion of representation services based on need.

Year in Review...

From citizenship & asylum clinics, to KYR workshops, to individual cases, to celebrating our 6th annual Hope for Immigrants: Rooted in Resilience event, where we raised over \$113K, this year has taken many hands and hearts to advance our mission.

This year we honored Judi Bernstein-Baker, Esq. and Mike Malvey, Esq. for their immense impact on EILS and immigrant communities in Philadelphia



Year in Review...

The incredible outpouring of support from board, volunteers, donors and grantors in the face of deep violations of immigrant rights has been fortifying.

The commitment of our staff remains unwavering as we continue to provide vital services to our dear community members, centering low-income, Latino communities daily.



Ways to Support Our Mission

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MAKE A GIFT

as an institution or individual to support EILS' work, including increasing staff capacity for removal defense



LEAVE A LEGACY GIFT

by creating your will using our free tool



GIVE VIA DONOR ADVISED FUNDS (DAFs)

to increase impact while maximizing tax benefits



VOLUNTEER

your time & skills, including legal and Spanish language

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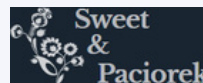
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