FREDERICKSBURG IMMIGRATION JUSTICE FUND

Removing Financial Barriers. Restoring Dignity. Renewing Hope.

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Choosing an Immigration Lawyer & Avoiding Fraud

Immigration cases can have life-changing consequences. Choose someone who is qualified, trustworthy, and experienced. Ask questions, understand the fees, and know who is actually handling your case.

Choosing Qualified Legal Help

- **Make sure the person is authorized.** Immigration legal advice should come from a licensed attorney or a DOJ Accredited Representative working through a DOJ Recognized Organization.
- **Look for relevant immigration experience.** Ask whether the lawyer regularly handles cases like yours, such as asylum, removal defense, detention, family petitions, or appeals.
- **Verify credentials.** Check that the attorney's law license is active and in good standing. DOJ also maintains lists of Accredited Representatives, Recognized Organizations, and disciplined practitioners.

Questions to Ask Before Hiring Someone

- Who will actually handle my case?
- Have you handled cases like mine before?
- What are my possible options and risks?
- What are your fees, what do they include, and will I receive a written agreement?
- How will you communicate with me about my case?

Watch for Red Flags

- Someone calls themselves a "notario," "immigration consultant," or "visa consultant" but is not an attorney or DOJ Accredited Representative.
- They guarantee approval or promise a specific result.
- They tell you to lie, provide false information, or sign documents containing information that is not true.
- They ask you to sign blank forms or documents you do not understand.
- They refuse to give you copies of documents filed for you or receipts for payments.

- • They claim special connections with immigration officials or promise to speed up your case through personal contacts.

Protect Yourself

- **Never sign something you do not understand.** Ask questions and request an interpreter if needed.
- **Keep copies.** Save applications, notices, court documents, contracts, receipts, and anything submitted on your behalf.
- **Get a second opinion.** If something does not feel right, talk with another qualified immigration attorney or DOJ Accredited Representative before signing or paying.

IMPORTANT: "Notario" does NOT mean lawyer in the United States. In some countries, a notario público may be a highly trained legal professional. In the U.S., a notary public is not an attorney and is not authorized to give immigration legal advice simply because they are a notary.

FIND LEGAL REPRESENTATION

VERIFY DOJ ACCREDITED REPRESENTATIVES

FIJF does not provide legal advice or legal representation. This handout provides general information only.