

RMIAN ADVOCACY PRIORITIES 2024

What are RMIAN's top five advocacy priorities?

1. EXPAND UNIVERSAL REPRESENTATION
2. SUPPORT IMMIGRANT YOUTH & FAMILIES
3. COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING
4. ABOLISH ICE DETENTION
5. PROTECT PEOPLE FLEEING PERSECUTION AND TORTURE

1. EXPAND UNIVERSAL REPRESENTATION

Universal representation advances a public defender system for people facing deportation, where every person is represented by a lawyer regardless of income, race, national origin, or history with the criminal legal system.

- ▶ **Local** – expand municipal immigration legal defense funds ([Denver](#) & [Fort Collins](#))
- ▶ **State** – [HB21-1194, Immigration Legal Defense Fund](#) created a mechanism to fund universal representation in Colorado; RMIAN advocates for the fund's expansion to ensure access to counsel, which is critical to uphold fairness and due process
- ▶ **Federal** – support federal funding for legal representation under the [Fairness to Freedom Act](#)

2. SUPPORT IMMIGRANT YOUTH & FAMILIES

RMIAN's Children's Program advocates on behalf of unaccompanied immigrant youth and families.

- ▶ **Local** – zealously advocate for clients before the courts and agencies and connect them to culturally appropriate community resources to address needs such as food insecurity, housing instability, mental health, substance use, health insurance, applying for benefits and other essential services
- ▶ **State** – engage in legislative fixes in Colorado to change and clarify state laws and policies that negatively impact immigrant youth and families
 - provide trainings and oversight of the enforcement of [HB21-1060](#), which ensures uniformity and fairness for U visa certification requests for crime survivors across Colorado
 - lead litigation before the federal district court to address delays in adjudications
 - advance legislation clarifying that parental death is abandonment for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) eligibility
- ▶ **Federal** – call for legislative fixes to remove barriers preventing youth and families from accessing work authorization and permanent legal relief
 - eradicate the SIJS backlog, including promoting the [Protect Vulnerable Immigrant Youth Act](#)
 - educate stakeholders and the public about federal policies that create expedited timelines that limit access to counsel and hamper fundamental fairness
 - end the expedited adjudication of family cases – including Dedicated Dockets & Family Expedited Removal Management (FERM)
 - seek permanent protections for DACA recipients and immigrant youth seeking a pathway to U.S. citizenship

3. COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

RMIAN strives to expand access to information and greater understanding of human trafficking and the ways in which survivors qualify for immigration relief and other public benefits.

- ▶ **Local** – educate directly impacted people, community members, and government officials to enhance comprehension of the ways in which people are trafficked, their legal rights, and accompanying benefits
- ▶ **State** – advance legislation that creates vacatur process for survivors of human trafficking who were wrongfully convicted for conduct stemming from the underlying trafficking situation
- ▶ **Federal** – support federal legislation that empowers and protects survivors of human trafficking while also eliminating root causes

4. ABOLISH ICE DETENTION

RMIAN believes that no one should be imprisoned while they seek legal benefits through civil immigration proceedings and calls for an end to the draconian practice.

- ▶ **Local** – provide holistic free legal representation and social service support to people fighting their immigration cases from detention, including psycho-social assessments, coping tools to manage the stressors of being detained, recognition of potential disparities faced by different communities, and psychoeducation that includes cultural sensitivity to mental health symptoms, trauma and substance use
- ▶ **State** – advocate for improved detention conditions, including by filing administrative complaints about the misuse of [solitary confinement](#), [failure to comply with COVID-19 guidance](#), and [inadequate medical care](#) at the Aurora immigration detention facility
 - memorialize failures in medical care by providing access to medical professionals through a medical/legal partnership with Denver Health
 - challenge unconstitutional confinement by litigating habeas corpus petitions
 - seek greater transparency through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) litigation
- ▶ **Federal** – collaborate with partner organizations to call for an end to immigration detention and advocate for improved conditions of confinement until it is abolished
 - engage in the [Communities Not Cages](#) and [Defund Hate](#) campaigns
 - educate advocates about the intersection of disability and immigration law and [how to seek safeguards and reasonable accommodations](#) for clients

5. PROTECT PEOPLE FLEEING PERSECUTION & TORTURE

People fleeing persecution and torture should have unrestricted access to the protections afforded under U.S. and international law.

- ▶ **Local** – educate the community and stakeholders about who is seeking asylum, why they are fleeing their homes, and ways in which we can support people seeking legal protections afforded under both U.S. and international law
- ▶ **State** – litigate fear-based cases before the Colorado Immigration Courts in Denver and Aurora
- ▶ **Federal** – advance litigation that expands the rights of people seeking asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture
 - defend wins and appeal unfavorable trial outcomes before the Board of Immigration Appeals and the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals to strengthen fear-based legal protections
 - craft amicus strategies targeting issues pivotal to RMIAN’s clients and others similarly situated
 - provide expert declarations and client narratives to support impact litigation challenging unfavorable policies and legal interpretations that negatively impact people seeking fear-based relief from removal

