

# PAIFUP

News from the fight for freedom, safety and dignity for all immigrants detained in Pennsylvania.

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2 CLIENTS RELEASED

2 NEW CLIENTS

11 HEARINGS

## April Recap

Last month we shared Saroun's story [featured in the Philadelphia Inquirer](#). He was released from detention! Read more on this below.

After meeting with Pittsburgh officials, PAIFUP secured funding to represent Allegheny residents. This is our second commitment from public funding.

Now, we are focused on securing additional funding from the city of Philadelphia for the FY22 fiscal year.

## Client Success: Saroun

Saroun is a lawful permanent resident who has resided in the United States since the age of four. His family fled the Cambodian genocide, ultimately resettling in Philadelphia as refugees. In March 2020, Saroun was arrested by ICE at his home where he lived and helped care for his elderly parents. ICE asserted that he had committed an aggravated felony based on a theft offense in 1998. This charge subjected him to mandatory detention where he was kept in conditions akin to solitary confinement. Three days after ICE took him into custody, he met his PAIFUP attorney, Lilah, who immediately began fighting against his deportation.



Lilah partnered with [VietLead](#) to offer support to his family and advocate on his behalf. Lilah argued that his case should be terminated, because his offense wasn't an aggravated felony, and began pursuing other avenues for relief including a pardon with support from VietLead. Two days before his next scheduled hearing, he was abruptly transferred to an ICE detention facility in Texas. In this transfer, Saroun was infected with COVID-19, which subjected him to lengthy quarantines and isolation in Texas and prevented him from appearing at any of his hearings or talking to counsel or his family for more than several minutes a week. Ultimately, after months of delays and quarantines, an Immigration Judge denied his case.

Saroun was then transferred to Oklahoma, where he got the unfortunate news that his mother had unexpectedly passed away. Lilah requested that he be transferred back to Pennsylvania for the funeral while his appeal was pending. ICE denied this request, and instead transferred him back to Texas. Then, ICE transferred him to yet another facility in Texas shortly after that, all while under a Court order to limit all transfers of individuals during the pandemic.

Lilah began pressuring ICE to release Saroun, filing requests and asking for his custody to be reviewed. VietLead began a public pressure campaign, rallying the community and calling on ICE to release him. Nearly 14 months after his detention, ICE released Saroun and he was greeted at the airport by community members and his team at VietLead, his family, and Lilah. Saroun returned to Philadelphia, the place he has called home for over 35 years, and quickly phoned his son, telling him “Daddy’s home.” Although his fight is not over, he is grateful to finally be free from detention and rejoin his family, including his ill father. Saroun continues to pursue his pardon and has hope that he can remain in the United States.

## Stronger Together: Meet Our Affiliates

# Immigrant Rights Action Doylestown

Immigrant Rights Action of Doylestown came together in March of 2017 in direct response to an ICE raid in the community that detained 4 residents. Their volunteer-led, bilingual organizing has built an effective community network to report ICE enforcement operations and provide immediate support to individuals at risk of deportation. **[Learn more about their work here.](#)**

## In Other News



### Andy Kang named executive director of PICC

The board of directors of Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition (PICC) announced that Andy Kang will become the executive director of the organization -which advocates for immigrants, migrants, and refugees throughout PA.

**[Read more](#)**  
**[generocity.org](#)**



### A Mother, Separated from Her Children, Comes Home

The Biden Administration has begun an ambitious effort to reunite more than a thousand families torn apart by Trump.

**[Read more](#)**  
**[www.newyorker.com](#)**



### After years in sanctuary, families struggle to start over

Across the country, dozens of undocumented immigrants took sanctuary in churches during former President Donald Trump’s administration in order to avoid deportation. That included three families in Philadelphia.

**[Read more](#)**  
**[why.org](#)**

Catch up on the previous issue here

Questions? Comments? News worth sharing? Send Karina, our PAIFUP coordinator, an email at [ksuarez@pirclaw.org](mailto:ksuarez@pirclaw.org).

**The Pennsylvania Immigrant Family Unity Project (PAIFUP)** is a collaborative of nonprofit organizations in Pennsylvania formed in order to achieve universal representation for detained immigrants in removal proceedings in PA.