

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 21, 2026

The Honorable Todd Blanche
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Sirce E. Owen
Acting Director
Executive Office for Immigration Review
5107 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA 22041

Dear Attorney General Blanche and Acting Director Owen:

We write to express our strong support for the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Recognition and Accreditation (R&A) Program within the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) and to express serious concerns about recent disruptions and staffing cuts that have paralyzed this vital program. We urge you to immediately restore full staffing and operational capacity. Across Colorado, non-profit organizations depend on the R&A program to enable them to deliver affordable, quality legal assistance to low-income and vulnerable immigrants who would otherwise be forced to navigate complex legal proceedings alone.

The R&A Program serves as a crucial bridge in our immigration system. By credentialing non-attorney staff and volunteers at eligible non-profits, the program expands access for immigrants to qualified counsel while easing severe court backlogs. Recent figures indicate that 71% of people facing deportation in Colorado immigration courts lack access to legal counsel¹. Unfortunately, recent administrative reassignments have depleted the program's adjudicative staff, leaving the office without the necessary personnel authorized to approve or deny applications. This delays both new applications and routine renewals, stalling non-profits nationwide that meet every legal requirement.

In Colorado, this operational disruption directly affects organizations serving both rural communities and urban centers. Key non-profit partners, including Compañeros: Four Corners Immigrant Resource Center in Durango, Catholic Charities of Southern Colorado in Pueblo, Hope Immigration Inc. in Colorado Springs, Iglesia de Jesucristo Pentecostal UPCI in Colorado Springs, and statewide coalitions like the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC) rely on R&A credentials to maintain their legal service capacity². Without timely renewals and accreditation approvals, these trusted institutions risk losing their legal authority to represent local residents, leaving communities without reliable counsel.

To restore the operational integrity of the R&A Program and support community providers across Colorado, we request that the DOJ take the following immediate steps:

¹ <https://www.vera.org/ending-mass-incarceration/reducing-incarceration/detention-of-immigrants/advancing-universal-representation-initiative/immigration-court-legal-representation-dashboard>

² <https://jamlac.org/expanding-access-to-justice-colorados-doj-accredited-representatives-network-grows/>

1. Immediately reassign or train senior adjudicators who possess explicit authority to approve and process Forms EOIR 31 (organizational recognition) and EOIR 31A (individual accreditation).
2. Clear the current application backlog and reinstate the 90-day processing standard to provide predictability for non-profit providers.
3. Reestablish transparent communication between EOIR leadership, recognized organizations, and community partners in Colorado and across the nation.

The R&A Program delivers a low cost, high impact framework that supports the efficient administration of justice while protecting vulnerable communities. We urge you to take immediate action to restore its full operational capacity.

We look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



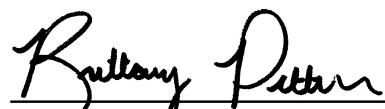
Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Brittany Petersen
Member of Congress