



FRIENDS OF FARMWORKERS

Settlement Reached in Immigration Fraud and Racketeering Lawsuit

Friends of Farmworkers, Inc. (FOF) and Langer, Grogan & Diver, P.C. jointly announce the settlement of claims brought by nine immigrant plaintiffs in a federal lawsuit under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO).

The lawsuit alleged that Ephraim Tahir Mella and the Law Offices of Tahir Mella, P.C. carried out two schemes to defraud individuals who sought immigration legal services from the law firm.

The Plaintiffs alleged that Defendants filed fraudulent immigration applications for them without their consent or knowledge, thereby recklessly and purposefully putting the plaintiffs into deportation proceedings. The Plaintiffs also alleged that Defendants made serious misrepresentations of immigration law to them.

As part of the settlement, Ephraim Tahir Mella and the Law Offices of Tahir Mella, P.C are subject to a [Consent Injunctive Order](#) signed by Judge Robert F. Kelly of United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania on March 7, 2017. Under the order, Ephraim Tahir Mella and the Law Offices of Tahir Mella, P.C are:

- Required to sign any future immigration application or petition prepared and filed on behalf of a client;
- Required to submit a signed Notice of Entry of Appearance with any immigration application prepared and filed on behalf of a client;
- Prohibited from representing to prospective clients and clients that Non-LPR Cancellation of Removal, a defensive form of immigration relief that is only available to individuals in deportation proceedings, is an affirmative application for lawful permanent residency, or a “green card”;
- Prohibited from collecting legal fees from an immigrant worker, rather than the sponsoring employer, when preparing and submitting an Application for Permanent Employment Certification, in compliance with 20 C.F.R. § 656.12(b); and,
- Prohibited from representing to prospective clients or clients that they are eligible to obtain lawful permanent residency through employer sponsorship when the client or prospective client (1) does not have a lawful entry into the United States; (2) is not otherwise eligible to adjust status pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1255(i); and (3) has no way to waive his or her inadmissibility under 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(B)(i) to be able to consular process.



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The Consent Injunctive Order provides standing to any aggrieved individual to enforce the Order.

Miguel Guzman Solano, one of the plaintiffs, said “as immigrants we don’t always know where to go for help. We are grateful for the support and help provided to us by Friends of Farmworkers.”

“We are very pleased with this settlement,” said Vanessa Stine, Co-Lead Counsel for the Plaintiffs. “Our clients brought this lawsuit not only to recuperate the thousands of dollars they lost but to also help protect other families from suffering the same fate as them. The Consent Injunctive Order will help ensure that our clients’ goal of protecting others is carried out.”

[Friends of Farmworkers, Inc.](#) has provided free civil legal aid to low-wage workers in Pennsylvania for nearly 40 years. This lawsuit was brought through FOF’s Notario Fraud Project, the only project in the state that provides free legal assistance to victims of immigration services fraud. The entire FOF team, including co-counsel Kathryn Brown and Liz Maria Chacko, contributed to this lawsuit.

“It has been a privilege to work with FOF on this case,” said John Grogan of [Langer, Grogan & Diver, P.C.](#) “Their commitment to providing legal representation to immigrant consumers is critical – particularly when the potential consequences of such scams are permanent family separation and deportation.”

[Langer, Grogan & Diver P.C.](#) is a Philadelphia-based complex commercial litigation boutique law firm built on a focus and dedication to the public good. Co-counsel Irv Ackelsberg of the firm also contributed to this lawsuit.

FOF and Langer, Grogan & Diver, P.C. wish to thank all those who provided assistance in this matter, including David Bennion of the Free Migration Project; Brennan Gian-Grasso of Gian-Grasso, Tomczak, & Hufe P.C.; Jonathan Grode of Green and Spiegel; and, William A. Stock of Klasko Immigration Law Partners, LLP.