

EXHIBIT 19

DECLARATION OF ANTON FLORES

I, Anton Flores, hereby declare:

I make this declaration based on my personal knowledge and if called to testify I could and would do so competently as follows.

1. I am the Executive Director of Alterna and have served in this capacity since 2006 when I co-founded Alterna.
2. Prior to this, I was employed at LaGrange College, from 1997 to 1999, as an adjunct instructor of Social Work, and from 1999 to 2006, as an assistant professor of Social Work and the chair of the Department of Human Services.
3. Alterna is a faith-based, non-profit organization located in LaGrange, Georgia, and provides a variety of social services, primarily to the Latino immigrant community. Guided by biblical teachings to love our neighbors and care for the marginalized and the vulnerable among us, Alterna defines its work in three broad categories: providing accompaniment, advocacy, and hospitality to and on behalf of those who are in need.
4. Our services and programs include: crisis intervention case management for families and individuals experiencing legal, medical, employment, or family-related crises; accompanying our clients to medical, government, or

school appointments as necessary; accompanying our clients to appointments to apply for public benefits such as food stamps (SNAP), income verification and Medicaid; English language classes and community education on various issues; a housing facility near the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia, to provide accommodation for families and friends visiting detainees; transitional housing for families and individuals experiencing life emergencies and at risk of homelessness; advocacy for immigrants' rights; monitoring the detention of immigrants; and educational trips to Guatemala with a focus on social justice. We also organize a variety of events such as humanitarian visitations to immigration detention centers by local churches, vigils at detention centers, community forums, and an annual holy week pilgrimage for immigrants, which draws about 900 participants from across the state.

5. Besides myself, there is currently one volunteer staff member and several other occasional volunteers working at Alterna. We do not check the immigration status of our clients, and therefore do not have an exact figure, but many members of the community we serve and many of our clients are undocumented immigrants.

6. As a faith-based organization, we are very concerned that the implementation of HB 87 will directly oppose and infringe on our right to express our religious beliefs to welcome and care for everyone in our community regardless of their status. For example, we are specifically called to care for those who are hungry, imprisoned, or strangers among us (Mathew 25). However, under HB 87, instead of being able to freely practice our religious calling, we will be forced to wrestle with the new law that contradicts the mandates of our faith tradition as well as having to fear religious persecution and social pressures because of our programs and activities.
7. Our work will be significantly and negatively impacted by HB 87 in several ways. Staff at Alterna, including myself, regularly accompany and drive our clients (at least five times a week), most of whom are likely to be undocumented immigrants (due to our demographics), to court, hospitals, or school appointments. While driving clients to these appointments, I, and my staff, have been stopped by the police for minor traffic violations or warnings, and this is always a possibility in the future. Under HB 87, this fundamental service we provide to our clients may become a criminal offense. Moreover, we provide transitional housing to families and

individuals experiencing temporary hardships without inquiring about their legal status, and we encourage families of those in immigration detention at the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia, to stay in our nearby housing facility. Families can come from anywhere in the United States, including outside of Georgia, to stay with us as they visit their loved ones. We do not check the immigration status of families seeking to stay at our housing facility, nor will we in the future. Under the new law, we will either be prevented from continuing to offer these important services or face potential criminal liability.

8. Our clients and the members of the community we serve will also be detrimentally impacted by the new law. Many members of our Latino immigrant community, including undocumented and documented immigrants as well as U.S. citizens, have expressed fear and apprehension about the enforcement of HB 87. Many of them are limiting their participation in activities that require driving in the state, even if they may be U.S. citizens or otherwise possess the required documentation, because of the fear that they will be racially profiled or harassed by law enforcement under the new law. We have witnessed an immediate and drastic decrease in attendance at our English language classes since HB 87 was signed into law,

and Alterna has had to cancel classes because attendance has dropped off. Individuals who could greatly benefit from these classes, which offer language instruction and other resources for successful integration into the U.S. society, are being prevented from receiving these helpful opportunities out of fear that they will be apprehended, or detained and investigated by law enforcement because they cannot produce the required documents even if they maintain legal status in the United States. I also know some families and individuals who have chosen or are considering relocation to a different part of the United States or their home country because of HB 87. This kind of trend will certainly produce an economic impact for the whole neighborhood as businesses close and the workforce grows smaller.

9. This is an understandable response from the community in light of the extensive history of discriminatory treatment of individuals who look or sound Latino in the neighborhood. For example, in 2009, 194 roadblocks were set up by the police in LaGrange, and a disproportionate number of Latino drivers were stopped, investigated, or arrested. Informal conversations with Caucasian members of our community have revealed that they are regularly waived through the roadblocks without being stopped. However, I have not met a single Latino individual who has been similarly

waived through a roadblock inspection. Based on a three month FOIA request to the La Grange Police department, immigrants in LaGrange paid nearly \$35,000 in fines for driving without a license in just that quarter alone, a disproportionate contribution from a group making up only about 5-10% of LaGrange's total population. In light of this history of racial profiling, and the fear that they will be stopped, detained, and harassed to an even greater degree if HB 87 is allowed to take effect, the Latino members of our community are likely to limit their attendance at events organized by Alterna significantly.

10. I have witnessed another dramatic reflection of the fear and apprehension felt by the community about the looming implementation of HB 87 during my accompaniment of a client to a local court a few days ago. Once a month the court holds what is called Interpreters Arraignments for non-English speaking members of the community. During that single day, approximately 50% of defendants, many of whom I gathered to be Latino immigrants because of their surnames and because of their need for an interpreter, failed to appear in court, and bench warrants were issued for them. I have never seen such a high rate of absenteeism in the many years that I have accompanied individuals to this court. It is deeply troubling to

see that the new law is fostering a deep sense of distrust and fear of the police as well as the court system and leading people to avoid contact with them as much as possible. This will inevitably result in a less safe community for all because people will be afraid to report crimes or otherwise work with the law enforcement institutions.

11. In fact, I know a Latino individual who had been a victim of a violent crime on two different occasions and courageously chose to report the incidents to the police. However, even though the individual was eligible to apply for a U-Visa as a crime victim, the police refused to provide him the victim certification, which is a necessary document for the U-Visa application. In the Atlanta Journal Constitution, the local police chief had expressed his view that he would refuse such requests because immigrants could manipulate and abuse the process. These kinds of experiences send a clear message to the members of our community that they cannot trust the police. Even though this event happened prior to the adoption of HB 87, such events are only likely to become more common with its implementation.

12. It is difficult to see how this kind of atmosphere of mistrust will foster cooperation with the police and ultimately, a safer neighborhood for all, or why public safety should not be a higher priority of the local law

enforcement agencies. If people cannot trust the police, criminal elements are likely to increase and jeopardize the safety for all of us in the neighborhood.

13. I am also deeply concerned about the future of Alterna. I have no doubt that we will continue to serve an important need in our community, and that we will find a way to fulfill our mission. However, HB 87 has already had a profound impact on our ability to provide the services as I described above. This is true both because many of our clients are increasingly fearful to attend our programming and events and are choosing to leave the state. And, when they do attend, we have to deal with the community's fears of HB 87 before we can get to our actual objective—like ESL instruction or accompanying our clients to attend appointments. If HB 87 goes into effect, Alterna will continue to be harmed by the law, though we will always continue to struggle to help our clients.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

EXECUTED this 1st day of June, 2011 in LaGrange, GA.



Anton Flores