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CONSULADO DE MÉXICO
EN INDIANÁPOLIS



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Consulado de México en Indianápolis

Indianapolis, Indiana, August 3rd 2018

To whom it may concern.

The Consulate of Mexico in Indianapolis was established in 2002. Since then the Protection and Legal Affairs Department has been overseeing the task of protecting Mexican's civil. The priority of the Mexican government is looking after those incarcerated or detained in county jails, state correctional and federal prisons in Indiana, Illinois, Ohio and Kentucky.

Throughout the year, staff of this Diplomatic Representation visits different kind of facilities across the four states in its jurisdiction in order to provide the necessary assistance. Such assistance provided to these inmates includes free legal consultation and in some cases the Consulate is able to disburse funds to cover attorney fees.

Mexican inmates have expressed to the Consular officials that from the moment they are arrested and taken to court for their multiple hearings, they are *isolated*. This isolation goes beyond the special housing units, implying a sort of mental seclusion due to the fact of being a non-English speaking person. As it can be understood this creates a language barrier that makes very difficult to demand their civil rights and to express personal necessities.

In addition, they remain in this *isolation* because they cannot understand what is being said by the Judge, Prosecutor, Witnesses, other Defendants and even their Public Defender. Regarding the Public Defenders, they do not have the same opportunity to visit the Mexican inmates due to their need of having an interpreter. In fact, the attorneys meet their non-English speaking defendants until the second or third hearing, which at some times causes legal gaps that affect the due process.

This situation seems to be continuous according to some of the inmates. They have complained to the Consulate that sometimes do not have an interpreter at the plea hearing. It has been mentioned to consular officials that despite not understanding English, inmates are required to sign documents because "it is their best option".

Due to the seriousness of these events the Consulate of Mexico wishes to express its concern about Mexican Nationals not getting a due process and a fair trial, moreover when they are not able to understand that taking a guilty plea affects their criminal case and therefore will face immigration consequences, such as deportation and eventually family separation.

The Consulate of Mexico remains confident that the above mentioned concerns will be taken into account whenever handling inmates' protocols in this regard are revised.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luis E. Franco".

Luis E. Franco
Consul of Mexico