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Contact:

Marisa Kollias

marisa.kollias@illinois.gov

IDHS Announces Appointment of Ruth Lopez McCarthy as Senior Immigration Fellow

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) announced today the appointment of Ruth Lopez McCarthy as Senior Immigration Fellow. In this role, Lopez McCarthy will serve as the cross-agency statewide leader on immigration and refugee issues, working closely with both the Office of the Governor and IDHS, where the State’s Bureau of Immigrant and Refugee Services and its Welcoming Centers are administered. The State of Illinois is home to 1.8 million immigrants, the sixth-largest immigrant population of any state in the nation.

“We are thrilled to have Ruth join as Senior Immigration Fellow – her professional background, knowledge, and expertise are invaluable to Illinois’ communities and immigrant families,” **said Grace B. Hou, Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services.** Her extensive experience in immigration and legal services, as well as policy development, advocacy, and implementation at national, state, and local levels, make her the perfect fit for this role.”

Lopez McCarthy is a mission-driven leader with over 17 years of extensive immigration and legal services both on a local and national level. Before joining the state, she created the "Illinois Is Ready" campaign at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. The campaign served as a clearinghouse for Illinois-specific information regarding the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA), including services for Illinois immigrants in employment, education, health, and social welfare.

The campaign developed community-led strategies for large-scale implementation and a model immigration navigator/ train-the-trainer program. After working as a community organizer in her hometown of Chicago, Ruth obtained her J.D. from Chicago-Kent College of Law. Most recently, she ran the Legal Protection Fund at the National Immigrant Justice Center, a program funded by the City of Chicago, aimed at providing rapid legal information and community education, screenings, consultations, and representation to individuals in need of trustworthy immigration representation. She is fluent in Spanish and licensed to practice law in the state of Illinois.



JB Pritzker, Governor

Grace B. Hou, Secretary

“As the daughter of immigrants, I have witnessed first-hand the struggles of immigrant communities. As a student at the University of Illinois, I learned of the suffering and strife experienced by Latinx and marginalized communities in America. As a community organizer and attorney, I have fought alongside immigrant communities across the country. I am honored to serve in this role and want to thank Governor Pritzker for the opportunity to work on behalf of the State of Illinois,” **said Ruth Lopez McCarthy**. “I look forward to assisting the administration and advancing opportunities for immigrants and refugees across the State.”

Lopez McCarthy’s proven track record of building strong relationships in immigrant and refugee communities and profound commitment to immigrant issues will be critical assets to the IDHS team.

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