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By:  Rodriguez H.R. No. 1237

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, Members of the Austin Sanctuary Network have demonstrated tremendous dedication to the well-being of vulnerable asylum seekers; and

WHEREAS, Founded in 2015, ASN is a coalition of faith communities, immigrants, and others committed to sheltering and assisting immigrants and asylum seekers who have fled dangerous and deadly conditions in their countries of origin; the network upholds the time-honored tradition of offering safe haven in places of worship as it stands in solidarity with undocumented immigrants who are being detained unjustly and denied asylum status; and

WHEREAS, ASN strives to create a community to provide physical sanctuary for immigrants who have exhausted their legal options and face deportation; congregations offering sanctuary supply shelter, needed food, clothing, and legal, medical, and educational assistance; and

WHEREAS, Since late 2016, as Immigration and Customs Enforcement has become more aggressive in pursuing undocumented immigrants, ASN has broadened its scope in order to protect human rights; it has embraced asylum seekers Alirio Gamez, Hilda Ramirez, and Ivan Ramirez as members of the community, supporting them as they live in sanctuary at two local churches; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gamez escaped violence and death threats in El Salvador, and in September 2017, he received sanctuary at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin; Ms. Ramirez and her young son, Ivan, fled violence in Guatemala, and they have been residing at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church for nearly three years; the lives of all three are at risk if they are sent back to their countries of origin; previously, they were determined to be a low-level priority for deportation and were granted temporary stays, and ICE is vested with the discretion to decline to pursue enforcement or to further defer action, given that the interest served is not substantial or is outweighed by other considerations; and

WHEREAS, Alirio Gamez, Hilda Ramirez, and Ivan Ramirez are seeking asylum in this country, as is their legal right, and the Austin Sanctuary Network is working with faith and compassion to help these brave members of the faith community realize their dreams of living in safety and freedom and making positive contributions to our society; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas Legislature hereby recognize the Austin Sanctuary Network for its efforts in behalf of asylum seekers Alirio Gamez, Hilda Ramirez, and Ivan Ramirez and commend the members of the network for their humanitarian work; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be prepared for ASN as an expression of high regard by the Texas House of Representatives.