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**Court Rules in Favor of Plaintiffs in Challenge to Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles Policy Denying Driver's Licenses to Certain Refugees**

COLUMBUS, OH – On Tuesday, February 25, 2020, U.S. District Judge Edmund A. Sargus, Jr., ruled that the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) policy of denying Ohio driver's licenses to certain groups of refugees is preempted by federal law, and enjoined the state from enforcing the policy. Community Refugee and Immigration Services (CRIS), a refugee resettlement agency in Columbus, and other plaintiffs filed a class-action lawsuit seeking to enjoin the BMV's policy in October 2018. The class is represented by Advocates for Basic Legal Equality (ABLE), a nonprofit law firm that provides civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and groups to help them achieve self-reliance, equal justice, and economic opportunity, and Porter Wright Morris & Arthur, LLP.

The BMV's unconstitutional policy prevented hundreds of refugees from receiving driver's licenses and Ohio identification cards if they had been in the United States for more than two years but had not yet obtained their green cards. This policy often hurt the poorest refugees who were unable to afford medical exam and other fees associated with green card applications.

“All refugees should be able to obtain driver's licenses and state IDs so they can fully participate in their new community,” said Angela Plummer, Executive Director of CRIS. “We are thrilled that the court has lifted one of the barriers to opportunity faced by our refugee clients, and we hope to have a positive relationship with the BMV going forward so that all who are eligible for an Ohio driver's license may obtain one.”

ABLE and Porter Wright also recently filed a related lawsuit on behalf of four other plaintiffs, including the Cincinnati-based Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center, which among other things organizes immigrant youth to promote immigration justice. That related lawsuit challenges another BMV policy, which effectively denies licenses and ID cards to the U.S.-citizen and documented minor children of undocumented parents by preventing those parents from co-signing their license applications. Judge Sargus also granted the plaintiffs' motion for summary judgment in that case and declared the policy unconstitutional.

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