

SPRING 2026

NEWSLETTER



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2026 Impact Event Recap

Across New York City, immigrant workers and families continue to face challenges, fear, and uncertainty, but their stories are also ones of resilience, courage, and justice. In this edition, we highlight the journeys of clients like Marissa and Peter, who, despite intimidation and years of legal obstacles, stood up for their rights and found pathways to security and stability. These individual victories are part of a broader effort to ensure the safety and dignity of immigrant communities here in New York City. Through community events and partnerships, like our recent collaboration with VIA, Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid, CMS ensures that immigrants have access to accurate information, trusted legal guidance, and compassionate support when they need it most.

May was a special month as we gathered with supporters, partners, and pro bono attorneys at our annual Impact Event to celebrate our honorees: **Latham & Watkins LLP** and **VIA Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid** and the collective work that makes these outcomes possible. Their dedication and generosity strengthen our ability to serve immigrant communities across New York City.

Together, these stories and moments reflect what is possible when communities come together to protect dignity, advance justice, and stand up against exploitation.

When Workers Stand Up: Justice Despite Immigration Threats

Marissa came to the U.S. in 2021, hoping to build a better life for herself and her two children. She quickly found a job at a salon, but her employer soon started stealing her tips and eventually stopped paying her. When Marissa asked her boss to pay her wages for the three weeks of work, he threatened to call ICE. Fearing these threats, Marissa decided to pack her supplies and leave that job. When she texted her employer he again responded with threats to contact ICE.

Marissa reached out to CMS for help, feeling hopeless and afraid. After speaking with an experienced attorney from CMS' Employment Unit, she finally felt safe enough to pursue her unpaid wages. However, even after her attorney stepped in, the employer continued to threaten Marissa

with immigration consequences if she pursued her claims. TCMS filed a complaint on Marissa's behalf with the New York State Department of Labor so that she could pursue her claim for not just unpaid wages, but for retaliation. At the same time, Marissa's attorney assisted her in documenting her employer's retaliatory threats, and helped her obtain a certification from the NYSDOL that she was the victim of a qualifying crime, so that she could apply for a U-visa.

As the NYSDOL investigated Marissa's case for over two years, Marissa continued as a self-employed hair stylist while caring for her two children in Queens. She recalls CMS support throughout this process, especially her attorney, who she describes as ***"an excellent person who truly cared about me and went out of her way to make sure I was okay."***

Marissa's U-visa application is still pending. Meanwhile, this past December, Marissa finally received the news she had hoped for: her case had been settled for nearly \$40,000 in unpaid wages and penalties for retaliation. This result gave her not just financial relief, but also justice and dignity. She now plans to use the money to follow her dream of opening her own beauty parlor.

A Decade of Determination: Peter's Path to a U Visa

Peter's journey was unexpected. He arrived in the United States in 2014 from Russia on a visitor visa. He was excited and eager to explore the city and the surroundings. He was in America for the first time. But after a thrilling night at Yankee Stadium, a brutal assault changed everything; he was attacked by strangers who slammed his head against a lamp post, and because of the assault, he sustained serious lacerations. Still, Peter's willpower endured. He cooperated with the police, providing evidence that led to justice.

As his visitor's visa neared expiration, he made the difficult decision to leave the US, determined to follow the rules even as he was still recovering. But his connection to this country remained strong, and he returned when he could, never overstaying his visa. When he came to CMS to inquire about pathways to stay in the US legally and permanently, CMS determined that he qualified for a U visa, which is meant to protect survivors of serious crimes, who suffer harm as a result of the crime and who cooperate with



Marissa

law enforcement. This type of visa takes many years to be adjudicated due to an annual visa limit of just 10,000 visas nationwide.

With CMS assistance, Peter began the U visa process in 2015. His U visa was finally approved in February 2026. Three years from now, Peter will be eligible to apply for a green card. Peter's story is one of resilience rather than just pain. Although he continues to live with a visible scar from the attack and has experienced lasting psychological trauma.



Left to Right: Jeanne and Xiomara
(CMS Senior Immigration Counselors)

Community Events

Stronger Together: CMS and Venezuelans & Immigrants Aid Supporting Asylum Seekers

On Saturday, March 14, our Associate Supervising Attorney, Julia Ponce-Vega, in collaboration with VIA – Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid, provided a short presentation for asylum seekers, shared important legal information and updates; and answered questions from attendees. Following the presentation, participants met individually with CMS attorneys and paralegals from the PSPP team to ask about their immigration cases.

Participants expressed deep appreciation for the generosity and humanity shown, describing the presentation as "excellent," "helpful," and a "blessing." Many also highlighted the kindness and organization of VIA volunteers and legal staff, specifically noting the professional guidance and "calor humano" they received.



VIA Staff & Volunteers, CMS Staff, and United Healthcare staff

2026 Impact Reception

On May 7th, Catholic Migration Services hosted our annual Impact reception to celebrate pro bono attorneys and community organizations whose dedication has made a lasting and meaningful impact in New York City's Immigrant Community. Congratulations again to our honorees: **Latham & Watkins LLP** and **VIA Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid**. Click [here](#) to access our event page and picture gallery.

Thank You to our sponsors and event attendees. Your contributions support Catholic Migration Services' mission to welcome the stranger in our midst by providing high quality free legal services to New York City residents, without regard to their religion, race, national origin, immigration status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.



VIA and Latham & Watkins LLP Award Recipients

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Coming in November 2026!

A banner for the 2026 Shining Star Celebration. It features the Catholic Migration Services logo at the top center, which includes a cross and the text "CATHOLIC MIGRATION SERVICES" and "PROMOTING JUSTICE AND COMPASSION". Below the logo, the text "2026 SHINING STAR Celebration" is displayed in large, stylized fonts. Two circular inset photos are included: one on the left showing a family with a man, a woman, and a child, and one on the right showing a priest presenting an award to a man. The entire banner is decorated with a background of gold stars.