

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
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## **Attorney General Submits Bill to Fight *Notario* Fraud**

*Immigration Services Protection Act Would Help Protect Immigrants from Businesses  
Unlawfully Targeting Spanish-Speaking Communities*

**WASHINGTON, D. C.** – Attorney General Karl A. Racine announced today that he has submitted legislation to the Council of the District of Columbia to fight so-called *notario* fraud, which takes advantage of immigrant communities. In Latin America, *notarios* are often authorized to practice certain types of law. In the U.S., some have taken advantage of this fact and advertise themselves as *notarios* offering legal advice and services, though they are not authorized to do so in the United States. Many non-citizens pay hundreds of dollars only to find out that they will never obtain a green card, legal immigration status, or other crucial benefits because they received incorrect advice from an unqualified *notario* fraudster unlawfully working as an immigration lawyer.

The Immigration Services Protection Act (ISPA), which is modeled after a law in Maryland, contains several provisions that will help protect consumers from *notario* fraud:

- It permits only licensed attorneys, individuals qualified under federal law, non-profit organizations, and legal clinics to perform immigration services;
- It requires services to be performed before the immigration services provider may charge a fee;
- It imposes contractual requirements that protect consumers and mandates that consumers have access to all documents prepared on their behalf; and
- It makes a violation of the act's provisions subject to the remedies provided under the District's Consumer Protection Procedures Act; those remedies include fines, restitution and other penalties.

**“We have seen individuals and businesses falsely advertising themselves as *notarios* and taking advantage of the District’s Spanish-speaking immigrant communities. This legislation gives us more tools to ensure that immigrants won’t be defrauded out of their money or get stuck with the potentially devastating**

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**consequences of incorrect immigration advice,”** said Attorney General Racine. **“The Office of the Attorney General is here to protect all of our consumers – including those who are often afraid to avail themselves of the justice system because they fear retribution due to their undocumented status.”**

The legislation grew out of the work the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) does as part of the Council for Court Excellence’s Notario Fraud Identification and Enforcement Working Group. This group works to share information about *notario*-fraud-related scams targeting immigrants. The group also works together to coordinate advocacy efforts on *notario* fraud and collaborates on enforcement actions. The group includes local and federal law enforcement agencies, non-profit organizations, and advocacy groups. The Hispanic Bar Association of D.C. collaborated with OAG in drafting the legislation.

OAG [recently brought a \*notario\* fraud lawsuit against the Unlimited Technologies and Services Corporation](#), doing business as UTS, and its owner, Mardoqueo M. Sanchez. The suit alleges that the defendants falsely advertised themselves as authorized to provide immigration services and harmed consumers by giving incorrect advice or failing to provide the promised services at all. The judge in the case has granted a preliminary injunction barring UTS and their owner from engaging in misrepresentation of their services while the lawsuit is pending.

Consumers who have been victimized by immigration services fraud may contact the OAG Office of Consumer Protection at (202) 442-9828.

Los consumidores que han sido víctimas de fraude de servicios de inmigración puede ponerse en contacto con la Oficina de Protección al Consumidor llamando al (202) 442-9828 .

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