



COMMISSION ON IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS

Recommendation Number: 2020422-002A3

Regarding: Increase in Legal Services Funding

WHEREAS, we heard that from the community that legal services funding is crucial, and that there is still unmet need

WHEREAS, there are immigrants who need access to counsel, and cannot afford attorneys. This is especially so for immigrants facing removal proceedings.

WHEREAS, in a time of increased enforcement, more people are at risk of being placed in removal proceedings. In a time of increasingly restrictive immigration policy, people have more need of legal representation, as it's become very complicated, and the risks of completing applications incorrectly are extremely high. Those most impacted are low income immigrants.

WHEREAS, the City of Austin already funds legal services for low income immigrants who are Austin residents

WHEREAS, there is a need for increased funding. Immigrants often work in the service industry and are being hard hit by the COVID-19 situation. To compound that, if they do not have work authorization, they are not eligible for unemployment, and if at least one person in the family does not have a social security number, the family is not eligible for the stimulus payment. This leaves immigrant families in a significantly worse situation than other Austin families at this time. Meanwhile, immigration rules continue to get more restrictive, so the need for legal representation increases. In fact, the President just tweeted that he would suspend all immigration, which puts immigrant families in Austin in dire need of representation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Immigrant Affairs recommends that we add funding. With an additional \$130,000, Catholic Charities can hire an attorney to represent people in removal proceedings pro bono. With an additional \$100,000, American Gateways can continue to represent families already benefiting from city funds, and also double the number of new cases they can take.

PASSED by the Commission on Immigrant Affairs on April 22, 2020.

Unanimously approved by the Commission on Immigrant Affairs on an 10-0 vote with Glenn Rosales and Banafsheh Madaninejad absent.

Attest:

Connie H. Gonzales

Staff Liaison