



COMMISSION ON IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS

REGULAR MEETING

MONDAY, June 6th, 2022 6:30PM

Meeting Minutes

Boards Members in Attendance:

Juan Vences-Benitez, Chair

Adrian De La Rosa

Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch

Krystal Gomez, Vice-Chair

Aditi Joshi

Karen Crawford

Rennison Lalgee

Board Members not in Attendance:

Sara Becker

Joseph Ramirez-Hernandez

Karen Reyes

Nicole Merritt

Glenn Rosales

Staff in Attendance:

Sarah Williams, Acting Staff Liaison, Administrative Sr for the Health Equity Unit, Austin Public Health

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Juan Vences-Benitez called the Commission Meeting to order at 6:44 p.m.

1) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 4, 2022; May 2, 2022

- a) The minutes from the meeting of 4/4/2022 were approved on Commissioner Karen's motion, Commissioner Krystal seconded, all in favor.
- b) The minutes from the meeting of 5/2/2022 were approved with edits on Commissioner Aditi's motion, Commissioner Krystal seconded, all in favor.

2) NEW BUSINESS: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS:

- a) **Lucio Del Toro, First Assistant at the Travis County Attorney's Office, briefing and discussion on U-Visa certification process**
 - i) Delia Garza has been in office as the County Attorney for about a year and a half. They handle only misdemeanors, criminal prosecutions, and represent the County in civil matters. They are one of the largest law firms in the city. Lucio Del Toro is directly over the criminal division.



- ii) There is not a formal written policy for the U-Visa process, they are handled on a case-by-case basis. Most people applying for U-Visas are victims of domestic violence. Lucio has been working on modernizing the process and increasing efficiency.
- iii) Lucio reviews all U-Visa applications. They do not look to disqualify anyone because by-and-large, they should qualify. The biggest delay is communication between their office and the lawyers, as the lawyers are often not very familiar with this specific process. The application is incredibly important and must be filled out correctly to verify they meet the basic requirements.
- iv) They have been getting consultations and feedback on their process from American Gateway and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. They have not created a formal policy because they have more flexibility without one. Formal policy can actually hurt the people during the process because it does not account for their individual circumstances. Stricter policy means there are more reasons to disqualify someone.
- v) There has not been a tracking system for the process or data collection in the past for the office. They are one piece of a much larger process, but they have not disqualified anyone since they have been in office.
- vi) Applications are submitted to the office and staff put together the information. Then, all applications go directly to Lucio for review. If something needs fixed or clarified, Lucio or his support staff will communicate with the person's lawyer to try to resolve the issue. If they were denied, they can reach back out to Lucio to appeal the decision where they can submit more information or meet directly with Lucio. Staff should be confirming that they received the application and stay in communication. Please reach out again if you have not gotten a response from the office. To contact Lucio Del Toro about the U-Visa certification, email Lucio.Deltoro@traviscountytexas.gov
- vii) U-Visa can be certified while the case is pending. In the past, offices were hesitant to because there are drawbacks to that, but they currently believe that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks.
 - (1) The Commission may be interested in forming a working group to research more and create some recommendations for their office. Will discuss more

b) Updates from Rocio Villalobos on her work with the Equity Office

- i) Enhanced library card – After some meetings with the community and Councilman Fuentes' office, they are moving away from the Municipal ID and returning to the Enhanced Library Card idea. They will be doing some townhalls soon to get more feedback. Rocio, Jason Alexander, and Bryan Oaks are also discussing partnering the Enhanced Library Card with the Mastercard City Program, where the card could also be used for other city services.
- ii) Rocio attended the Welcoming Interactive Conference in North Carolina. Welcome America announced a tiered program for becoming certified a "Welcoming City." They are looking for three local governments to pilot the Rocio will submit an application for Austin.

c) Commission on Immigrant Affairs 2022 Annual Report

- i) Juan created the initial document and shared it with the Commission. He is going through the minutes from the last year and pulling out highlights. It is due in July.

3) OLD BUSINESS

a) Budget updates – Karen

i) Joint Inclusion Committee Report

- (1) The JIC shared their report with the Commission. JIC is seeking endorsement from the Commission on Immigrant Affairs, but also would like commissioners to share with any relevant persons when discussing budget.
- (2) The report talks about the process, and then groups the recommendations they passed by subject. The subjects are based on past budget cycles.

The minutes were approved at the 08/01/2022 meeting on Krystal's motion, Sara's second on a 7-0 vote.