



Commission on Immigrant Affairs

Recommendation Number: 20190429-5AVI: Rental Assistance for Asylees and Refugees

Brief Title

The creation of a rental assistance grant to assist refugee and asylee families

Describe the Issue

Rising housing costs in the city have led to a lack of affordable housing in the central city and accessible areas. The average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment is over \$1,400 per month, notwithstanding the costs of rising utilities. Refugee and asylee families come to the United States with no financial resources and are offered only minimal and temporary funding from the government. Most refugees and asylees are initially only able to find work making \$8-\$10 per hour, making the costs of housing out of their reach. Furthermore, public transportation from areas outside the central city is typically unavailable, making it impossible for these individuals to access critical service providers, specialized school programs, medical facilities, and jobs in more remote, affordable areas. It is critical that refugee and asylee families live in proximity to these resources as they work to develop increased independent financial stability.

Data

Members from the City of Austin Commission on Immigrant affairs met with various City of Austin department officials to identify rental assistance resources for refugees living within the City of Austin. The departments included: HACA (Housing Authority City of Austin), CARITAS, ECHO (Ending Community Homelessness Coalition), Austin Public Health, and the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department (NHCD). Given their budgets are already channeled to help already identified needy families within the City, these departments were not able to identify additional resources to help refugees and asylees.

Recommendation to Address Issue (increase efficiency, effectiveness, and equity):

We recommend the City of Austin create a rental assistance grant of \$500,000 to help refugee and asylee families with affordable housing costs in Austin, so they can secure or remain in housing with access to transportation, employment, and services. This grant would provide as stipend of at least \$300 per month in rental assistance.

Strategic Outcome areas addressed by our recommendation:

Strategic Outcome 1:

Economic Opportunity & Affordability

Housing availability and affordability

Cost of living compared to income

Ability to improve your income

Strategic Outcome 2:

Health & Environment

Accessibility to quality health care services, both physical and mental

Date of Approval: 4/29/19

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 9-0 vote, Samuel Adair, Walid Kobrosly, and Nasario Jaimes not present

Attest: Connie H. Gonzales