



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Commission on Immigrant Affairs

Recommendation Number: 20210301-2b: 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; and

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

WHEREAS, in a time of changes in immigration policy, people have more need of legal representation, as it's become very complicated, and it is essential that immigrant communities obtain accurate advice and assistance. Those most impacted are low income immigrants; and

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

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. This leaves immigrant families in a significantly worse situation than other Austin families at this time. Meanwhile, immigration rules have been changing over the years and are due to change again; and

WHEREAS, other communities have decided to invest in legal representation for immigrants at a greater rate than Austin has. Harris County recently approved \$2.5 million in funding.¹

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Immigrant Affairs recommends that we increase funding for immigration legal services.

Date of Approval: March 1, 2021

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 9-0 vote with Samuel Adair and Glenn Rosales absent

¹ <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Harris-County-OKs-2-5M-to-help-poor-immigrants-15717330.php>

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a final flourish.

Staff Liaison