



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Joint Inclusion Committee

Recommendation Number: (20240327-017): Austin Public Health Immigrant Legal Services

WHEREAS, the Joint Inclusion Committee (“JIC”) of the City of Austin (“City”) serves as an advisory body that advocates for and inspires the City Council (“Council”) and City Manager on issues pertaining to equity, diversity, and inclusion to promote close cooperation between Council, City Management, City boards, commissions, committees, and task forces, and individuals, institutions, and agencies to increase and sustain equity, diversity, and inclusion in the city; and

WHEREAS, the JIC strongly recommends continued funding for the Austin Public Health (APH) Immigrant Legal Services program in the FY 2024-25 budget. This program plays a critical role in supporting the well-being of Austin's immigrant population; and


WHEREAS, APH Immigrant Legal Services currently has 2 contracts in place for American Gateways and 1 contract in place for Catholic Charities, all of which are set to expire at the end of the current fiscal year. The recent closure of Refugee Services of Texas has further reduced options for legal immigration assistance available in the community for refugees, many of whom are from Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Currently, we are aware that American Gateways does not have sufficient resources to serve those needing immigrant legal services and has a waitlist. We strongly recommend continued funding for the APH Immigrant Legal Services program at a level that allows it to meet the growing needs of Austin's immigrant population; and

WHEREAS, contractors for this program provide critical legal assistance to immigrants in Austin. The program helps immigrants navigate the complex legal system, with a focus on areas like citizenship, deportation defense, and access to public benefits.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Joint Inclusion Committee encourages the Austin City Council to allocate funding of \$700,000 is recommended to continue services currently being provided along with a suggested \$150,000 increase to better meet community legal needs from the closure of nonprofits serving refugees in our community.

Date of Approval: March 27, 2024

Record of the vote: 7-0, Commissioner Ortega Abstaining and Commissioners Vargas and Gordon (ECC), Commissioners Davis and Aslam (Human Rights) absent

Attest:  _____

Vice- Chair