



## BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

### Commission on Immigrant Affairs

#### Recommendation Number: (20240506-015): Austin Public Health Immigrant Legal Services

WHEREAS, the Commission on Immigrant Affairs (CoIA) advises the city council on issues of common concern to immigrants, particularly in the areas of health and human services, education, and the demographic makeup of the Austin immigrant community; to monitor requirements of federal, state, and local immigration, welfare and other laws that affect immigrants, and recommend to the city council actions to maximize the benefits to local immigrants under existing laws and to minimize the adverse impacts to local immigrants under the laws; promote recognition of the contributions of the foreign-born to the economic and cultural vitality of Austin; and promote the availability of, and promote accessibility to, local educational, economic, legal, and social resources for immigrants.

WHEREAS, the CoIA 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 Commission on Immigrant Affairs 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: May 6, 2024

Record of the vote:

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Vice- Chair