



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Human Rights Commission

Recommendation Number 20260323-009: Budget Recommendation for Immigration and Legal Assistance Funding

WHEREAS, under Section 2-1-148 of the Austin City Code, the Human Rights Commission is charged to secure for all individuals in the City freedom from discrimination based on national origin. Without access to legal counsel, immigrants face detention and deportation stripped of the constitutional protections of due process and the right to representation guaranteed under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments;

WHEREAS, 55 percent of people facing deportation in immigration court lack legal counsel; arrests of immigrants with no criminal record surged 2,450 percent in 2025; and interior deportations by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) increased more than four and a half times compared to 2024, without a court hearing or right to appeal under the expanded expedited removal policy; and,

WHEREAS, deaths in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody reached a two-decade high in 2025, with more people dying in ICE detention than in the prior four years combined, due to medical neglect, denial of care, and conditions that constitute both a public safety and human rights crisis; and,

WHEREAS, when immigrants cannot access legal counsel, they are less likely to report crimes and cooperate with local law enforcement, undermining public safety for all Austin residents; and,

WHEREAS, American Gateways, Austin's largest nonprofit immigration legal services provider, receives approximately 100 calls per week from immigrants seeking legal assistance and serves low-income clients across 23 Central Texas counties at no or low cost, yet relies on insufficient and inconsistent public funding to meet this demand.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Human Rights Commission urges the Austin City Council to allocate \$750,000 per fiscal year from the General Fund to American Gateways as a designated recurring annual appropriation.

Date of Approval: March 23, 2026

Motioned By: Vice Chair Zeidan

Seconded By: Commissioner Kirsh Pozen

Vote: 8-0

For: Chair Duhon, Vice Chair Zeidan, Commissioners Aslam, Davis, Kirsh Pozen, Krueger, Morgan Avitia, Oliva-Martínez

Against: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Off the dais: None

Absent: Commissioners Igram, Khawar

Attest: *Ryan Sperling*
(Ryan Sperling, Staff Liaison)