



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Board of Supervisors



Date: March 24, 2017
Board Meeting Date: March 28, 2017
Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Warren Slocum

Subject: Actions to Support Immigrants Residing in San Mateo County

RECOMMENDATION:

Hold study session to consider adoption of a resolution to support immigrants residing in San Mateo County by establishing an Office of Community Affairs; establishing a legal assistance fund for immigrants in an amount not to exceed \$267,000; and developing of a Countywide Language Access Policy.

BACKGROUND:

According to the American Community Survey, a third of San Mateo County residents are foreign-born and many of these residents have children who are United States citizens. According to the 2009-2013 U.S. Census Data, nearly half of San Mateo County residents (46%) speak a language other than English at home. Collectively, the County's residents speak more than 100 different languages.

DISCUSSION:

Office of Community Affairs

Between 2000 and 2010, the size of San Mateo County's immigrant population increased more than in any other California county, from 25.5 to 33.3 percent. Our County's immigrant population brings a vibrant culture and diversity to our communities, but at the same time, many immigrants face unique challenges that are exacerbated by linguistic, cultural and financial barriers. According to the Silicon Valley Community Foundation's San Mateo County Immigrant Focus Report, nearly 40 percent of survey respondents who reported their household income earned less than \$20,000 per year.

Establishing an Office of Community Affairs would promote and provide services to build linkages between County government and our County's diverse community, thereby increasing access to County services for underserved populations and allowing these residents to better integrate into community life. An Office of Community Affairs would be committed to the principle that all individuals, regardless of their background or immigration status, should be able to access social services, and participate as full

members of the community on matters of public interest. The attached resolution would direct the County Manager to take appropriate steps to establish an Office of Community Affairs and to return to the Board in the future with any staffing or funding plans that require Board approval.

Legal Assistance Fund

Further, rhetoric and actions coming from Washington D.C. have been felt throughout the County, from Pescadero to Pacifica and from East Palo Alto to Daly City, sowing fear among our most vulnerable population. The County has received reports of undocumented parents who, out of fear, have retreated into the shadows and of Dreamers who have stopped attending school out of the fear of being deported. Given the present circumstances, I believe that \$267,500 in funds should be made available to provide legal assistance to residents of San Mateo County who find themselves in civil removal proceedings in immigration court.

While it is the responsibility of the federal immigration courts, rather than the County, to determine when an individual is removable, by providing funds for direct legal services for immigrants in civil removal proceedings, our most vulnerable residents will receive assistance in litigating their cases. The funds would be allocated to legal service providers to pay for legal representation of San Mateo County residents in civil removal proceedings.

A 2015 survey published in the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* found that immigrants with legal counsel were nearly six times more likely to obtain relief in removal proceedings than immigrants without such counsel. However, nationally, only 37 percent of immigrants in removal proceedings are able to secure legal representation, and of the immigrants held in detention centers, only 14 percent have lawyers. Some jurisdictions in California, including the County of Los Angeles, the City of Los Angeles have approved such funding and other jurisdictions are considering similar measures.

Language Access Policy

Nearly 315,000 San Mateo County residents speak a language other than English at home. The County's Health System and Human Services Agency have established practices and procedures for assisting clients who speak a language other than English. Researching and developing an appropriate countywide Language Access Policy along the lines of the procedures in place in these departments would ensure that all residents have equal access to all departmental programs and services to person who have Limited English Proficiency consistent with the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act, Government Code Sections 7290, et seq., Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166.

After surveying current practices in our various County departments to determine how we can improve language access for all County residents, the County Manager will bring back to the Board an appropriate Language Access Policy for its consideration.

This resolution is in alignment with the County's commitment, as reflected in its mission statement, to treat "people with dignity and respect." This resolution will provide a

humanitarian response to our most underserve population at a time in which fear from the Federal Government has cause stress, concerns, lack of participation, and anxiety for our diverse residents.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact of this Resolution is unknown at this time.