



AGENDA STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item

ASR Control

2301

Doug Chaffee
Chris Wangsaporn
2023 APR -5 AM 11:31
RECEIVED

MEETING DATE: 04/25/23
 LEGAL ENTITY TAKING ACTION: Board of Supervisors
 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DISTRICT(S): 1, 4
 SUBMITTING AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: District 1, District 4
 DEPARTMENT CONTACT PERSON(S): Al Jabbar
 Chris Wangsaporn

SUBJECT: Establish an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

CEO CONCUR

COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW

CLERK OF THE BOARD
Discussion
3 Votes Board Majority

Budgeted: N/A

Current Year Cost: N/A

Annual Cost: N/A

Staffing Impact: N/A

of Positions: N/A

Sole Source: N/A

Current Fiscal Year Revenue: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

County Audit in last 3 years: N/A

Levine Act Review Completed: N/A

Prior Board Action: 8/24/2021 #S33H

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

1. Direct the County Executive Office to establish an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs within the County of Orange that will serve as a central hub for the coordination of services, resources, and advocacy efforts to support Orange County’s immigrant and refugee populations in accordance with the requirements of state and federal law.

SUMMARY:

Establishing an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs within the County of Orange will allow the County of Orange to better assist the immigrant and refugee populations residing in Orange County.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The withdrawal of the United States military from Afghanistan in summer 2021 resulted in 76,000 Afghan refugees arriving in the United States, many of them families with young children. Of those 76,000 refugees, 500 refugees arrived in Orange County. Though Orange County is no stranger to refugees, the county has not experienced an influx of refugees at this rate for several decades. When the Afghan refugees arrived in Orange County in 2021, the support infrastructure for refugee resettlement had decreased significantly from 46 years ago when the Vietnam War refugees arrived in the county. The

needs of refugees, however, remains the same – housing, legal advice, social services support, health care, education, and employment.

Immediately, the County of Orange (County) mobilized an interdepartmental team consisting of the County Executive Office (CEO), Social Services Agency (SSA), and Health Care Agency (HCA) to assist local resettlement agencies in their efforts to provide services to the Afghan refugees seeking refuge in Orange County. On August 24, 2021, the Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted a resolution approving the “3 Step Plan for the Resettlement of Afghan Refugees.”

Collectively, this interdepartmental team assisted the Afghan refugees with applying for and obtaining social services benefits, enrolling children in school, accessing healthcare, and identifying opportunities for employment. The County’s effort contributed significantly to the resettlement agencies’ ability to expeditiously resettle these refugees. The County completed its effort to assist the Afghan refugees in June 2022. However, the County continues to receive requests to assist new refugees arriving in Orange County.

Furthermore, the Migration Policy Institute reported in 2021 that California’s immigrant population had increased 17.9 percent from 2000. In 2021, California’s population was comprised of 10.45M immigrants, which accounted for 26.6 percent of California’s total population (39.24M). While the classifications are different, immigrants experience similar challenges, and have similar needs, as refugees.

Approval of the recommended action will establish an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) that will serve as a central hub for the coordination of services, resources, and advocacy efforts to support Orange County’s immigrant and refugee populations.

Responsibilities of OIRA may include, but is not limited to:

1. Connecting immigrants, certain nonimmigrant visa holders, and refugees to resources available in Orange County, in accordance with the requirements of state and federal law.
2. Strengthening partnerships with existing non-profit organizations and establishing new relationships to support immigrants and refugees as they navigate through immigration and other government systems.
3. Developing, implementing, and coordinating outreach and educational programs for immigrant and refugee communities.
4. Promoting immigrants’ and refugees’ self-sufficiency, permanent residency, and civic engagement in partnership with local organizations and government agencies.
5. Coordinating with City, County, State, and Federal agencies to provide information on housing, workers’ rights, and avoiding legal scams targeting immigrants and refugees.
6. Supporting policies that advance the inclusion and the rights of immigrant and refugee communities at the Local, State and Federal levels.
7. Engaging stakeholders to solicit information and collaborate on how to improve services for immigrant and refugee communities.
8. Evaluating and improving the implementation of language access, translation, and interpretation services for county programs and other key systems.
9. Ensuring that the provision and coordination of available public services to eligible immigrants, certain nonimmigrant visa holders, and refugees complies with the requirements of state and federal law.

The ultimate vision for OIRA will be to enable immigrants' and refugees' self-sufficiency and their productive assimilation into the community.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: To be determined.

STAFFING IMPACT: To be determined.