

04/25/2023

RE: Item 42 Directing the County Executive Office to Establish an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs within Orange County – SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors,

The 21 undersigned immigrant and refugee serving organizations write in support of Item 42, Directing the County Executive Office to establish an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) within Orange County, with some amendments and additions to ensure a strong foundation for the OIRA in its early months and years.

We ask that the Board of Supervisors adopt the following amendments and additions in your instructions to the County Executive Office to establish an OIRA:

1. Direct the County Executive Office to establish the OIRA as an independent office. An OIRA requires the same autonomy and scope as departments like the Health Care Agency, OC Community Resources, Social Services Agency, and Child Support Services. An independent office would provide the necessary scope and autonomy to effectively address the unique needs and collaborative opportunities when working with the immigrant and refugee community.
2. Direct the County Executive Office to adopt a definition of immigrant for points 1 and 9 within the staff report for this motion to be “any first- or second- generation individual whose family moved temporarily or permanently from a foreign country and resides or plans to reside within Orange County. This includes individuals who moved for work, study, family reunification, or to seek asylum or refuge from political or social persecution. Individuals who are undocumented and those seeking or having obtained asylum, Temporary Protected Status, Violence Against Women Act, or any other protections as defined by immigration law shall be encompassed by this definition.”
3. Direct the County Executive Office to establish a taskforce of local immigrant and refugee community organizations that serve the Afghan, African, Arab, Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI), Black, Cham, Latino, Middle Eastern, Vietnamese, and other diverse immigrant populations to assist the County Executive Office in making recommendations and hiring a director-level county employee to lead the OIRA.
4. Direct the County Executive Office to ensure the OIRA is inclusive of immigrants of all races and ethnicities, including AAPI and Latino immigrants that account for 45.2% and 44.8% of Orange County’s foreign-born population, respectively.¹ Similarly, direct the County Executive Office to work closely with the task force to ensure the interests of individuals who reside within cities with significant immigrant populations including the cities of Santa Ana, Westminster, Garden Grove, Irvine, Anaheim, Buena Park, Tustin, Fullerton, Fountain Valley, amongst others are considered when establishing the OIRA.

¹ [OC Opportunity Initiative Report.pdf \(oc-cf.org\)](#)

By making these changes, the OIRA will be well-positioned to:

1. Promote business and facilitate public-private partnerships to empower the self-sufficiency of immigrant and refugee communities by creating more opportunities for job creation and economic development for all Orange County residents.
2. Facilitate collaboration and coordination between philanthropy, nonprofits, businesses, and city, county, state, and federal governments to streamline access to essential resources and support for the immigrant and refugee community and to ensure that the County is receiving all available philanthropic, corporate, state, and federal resources to empower its residents.
3. Support immigrant and refugee communities with legal services, language and cultural competence when seeking county services, service navigation, job application, civic engagement, youth development, education, and all other county offerings as related to the immigrant and refugee population.

We appreciate the Board's dedication to the immigrant and refugee community in Orange County and believe that with these amendments, the OIRA will be a ground-breaking step towards creating a more equitable and thriving Orange County for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Access California Services

ACLU of Southern California

Afghan American Muslim Outreach

Arab American Civic Council

Afghan Refugee Relief

Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California

Chispa

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights

Community Legal Aid SoCal

Council on American-Islamic Relations, California

Harbor Institute for Immigrant & Economic Justice

International Rescue Committee - Los Angeles

Islamic Circle of North America Relief

Islamic Shura Council of Southern California

Muslim American Society of Greater Los Angeles

Orange County Justice Fund

OC Rapid Response Network

Public Law Center

Qazizada Multicultural Therapy Clinic

Resilience OC

Shia Muslim Council of Southern California

South Asian Network

Uplift Charity