

## RECOMMENDATION FOR THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



### Establish an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

This office should serve as a one-stop shop for county services for immigrants and refugees.

In addition to coordinating government services, the office should develop programs and initiatives that promote permanent residency, language accessibility and civic engagement.

**San Diego County should establish an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to ensure all immigrants have the resources and services they need to achieve full social, economic and civic engagement.**

Our region's diverse, multi-cultural and multi-lingual communities make San Diego stronger and more vibrant.

Approximately 21.5 percent of county residents were born in other countries. Collectively, these residents speak 68 different languages and have a range of needs related to their transition into a new community.

Immigrants and refugees often face language and information barriers when trying to find resources and services that would help ease this transition and create a sense of belonging.

But, San Diego County does not coordinate government services or provide a centralized location for immigrants and refugees to access available resources and services.

Without a centralized location, immigrants - both newcomers and current county residents - must navigate these barriers largely on their own.

## MODELS: OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE AFFAIRS

### Los Angeles County Office of Immigrant Affairs

This office was created in 2017. Its goal is to advance the well-being of all immigrants in the county by providing info about immigrant, consumer and worker rights and connecting immigrants with support services. During the 2018 family separation crisis, the office connected impacted families with relevant resources, including legal assistance, and health and mental health services.

### Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

This office was created in 2012. Its mission is to support the settlement of immigrants and refugees into the city. The office offers services such as legal and citizenship assistance, English language classes, language accessibility and job skills trainings.

### New York Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

This office was established in 1984. To eliminate inequities, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) prioritizes three broad goals: (1) enhance the economic, civic and social transition of immigrants; (2) facilitate access to justice for immigrants; and (3) advocate for immigration reforms at all levels of government.

#### Services and resources provided by MOIA include:

##### The NYC Immigrant Information Desk

The information desk provides immigrants with resources and referrals for city services such as immigration legal services, renters' rights information, health insurance navigation and more.

##### Services for Recently Arrived Immigrants and Refugees: Resource and Referral Guide

This guide provides information on services available to recently arrived immigrants. It is also available to city agencies, schools, nonprofit organizations and other groups working with individuals or communities that may benefit from this information.

## AN OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE AFFAIRS SHOULD:

Promote social, economic and civic engagement;

Advocate on behalf of immigrant and refugee communities at local, state and national levels and provide these communities with updates on relevant legislative and policy changes;

Facilitate language accessibility to ensure all public service information is easily available to everyone;

Provide "know your rights" info and legal services relevant to immigrant communities; and

Support and amplify the work of local organizations that provide resources and services to the county's immigrant communities.

**San Diego County should follow these examples by establishing an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to ensure all immigrants have the opportunity to settle into and thrive in their new communities.**