

March 8, 2018

The Honorable Muriel Bowser  
Mayor of the District of Columbia  
The John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

We write as a coalition of diverse organizations that are united by our deep commitment to support, empower, and protect the District's vibrant community of immigrants. In your Fiscal Year 2019 Proposed Budget, we are asking you and your administration to fully fund immigration legal services with \$1.8 million in recurring funds. Your commitment to do so would send an unequivocal message to DC's immigrant community – and the rest of the country – about DC values of diversity and inclusivity.

In the last year, immigrant detentions have increased 40% as the Trump administration targets a wide swath of the immigrant community for removal from the United States. These include individuals who have lived in the United States for decades, with strong family and community ties. In addition to targeting those who are currently living in the country without status, the administration is affirmatively stripping immigrants of legal status by eliminating programs such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

Fully funding DC's immigration legal services is a moral and economic imperative. Immigrants comprise a large, culturally rich, and economically valuable segment of DC residents. They are a community in crisis, facing needs that go far beyond standard city services. More than one in seven DC residents are immigrants, while another one in ten residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent. In addition, there are nearly 1,000 DC residents who have applied for DACA, and over 32,000 TPS holders in the Washington metro area.

The potential economic impact of DC's failure to protect our immigrant residents is significant. Immigrants are major contributors to DC's economy and vibrant entrepreneurship sector. Immigrant-led households in DC paid \$336.9 million in local taxes in 2014, in addition to \$712.5 million in federal taxes. In DC alone, 5,543 immigrant business owners account for 20.4 percent of all self-employed DC residents and generate \$163 million in business income.

If DC is to effectively push back against recent federal anti-immigrant policies, we must empower our residents with the requisite knowledge and tools, including access to free or low-cost immigration legal services. The single most important predictor as to whether an immigrant will be allowed to remain in the United States is whether she or he has access to legal counsel. At a minimum, all immigrants who are currently without status or are on the brink of losing status, should be screened by an immigration attorney to determine if they have any alternative forms of relief. Similarly, any DC resident who is detained based on immigration status should have access to legal assistance.

You have made a consistent public commitment to our DC values of diversity and inclusivity. Your support last year for the Immigrant Justice Legal Fund was a positive first step in increasing the capacity to provide legal counsel to immigrant DC residents. We respectfully ask that this initial effort evolve into

a fully funded and permanent program which will realistically address the needs of DC's immigrant community.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Abel Nuñez at 202-328-9799.

Sincerely,

Central American Resource Center (CARECEN)

Ayuda

Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington

DMV Sanctuary Congregational Network

Whitman-Walker Health