

March 13, 2024

The Honorable Dr. Corey Jackson  
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 2 on  
Human Services  
1021 O Street, Suite 6120  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Caroline Menjivar  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 3 on Health  
and Human Services  
1021 O Street, Suite 6720  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
1021 O Street, Suite 8230  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Scott Wiener  
Chair, Senate Budget Committee  
1021 O Street, Suite 8620  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Protect and Reinvest \$33 Million for California’s Immigration Legal Services Programs**

Dear Honorable Members:

We, the undersigned legal service providers, advocacy and community organizations, write to respectfully request that you **protect historic annual investments in California’s immigration legal services programs in the amount of \$33 million in the fiscal year 2024-25 budget. This budgetary request includes retaining \$15.2 million (GF) in state funding for the TPS and CSU Immigration Legal Services Programs proposed to be cut by the Governor’s January budget, as well as a reinvestment in the Children’s Holistic Immigration Representation Project (CHIRP) in the amount of \$17.8 million (GF).**

Immigration legal services are critical for the prosperity of our immigrant community and the future of our state. Immigration legal services provide immigrants a pathway to family unity, community integration and economic success. It can mean the difference between losing a parent to deportation or having a young person attain higher education. These programs build trust and foster a sense of security for immigrant Californians that have come under attack in recent years, so ensuring the preservation of these programs is highly critical. Although we are uncertain about the outcomes of the coming November election, the state of California can be proactive now in preparing for a potential shift in federal immigration policy.

The infrastructure that has been developed in the past five years through these programs has built bridges into rural regions and communities that are often overlooked and underserved. Destroying these bridges would not only be devastating to these communities, but it would leave California woefully unprepared for a return of the Trump administration.

In 2015, California created the first state-based program in the U.S. to dedicate public dollars – \$15 million in one-time funding – for qualified nonprofit organizations providing outreach, education and legal services to immigrants. California increased annual budget allocations for immigration legal services programs to \$30 million in 2016, \$45 million in 2017, \$65 million in 2018, \$75 million in 2019 – which has been an ongoing allocation since – and an additional one-time \$30 million allocation in 2021. These

critical state-based programs ensure children, youth, college students, workers, vulnerable individuals and families in California have access to legal services and representation they need to adjust their status and apply for immigration benefits and relief — such as Naturalization, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS) — or to defend their rights in government custody or in deportation proceedings.

California's Immigration Legal Services Programs include: One California Immigration Services Funding (ISF), Removal Defense (RD), Undocumented Unaccompanied Minors (UUM), Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Immigration Legal Services, California State University (CSU) Immigration Legal Services, California Community College Immigration Legal Services, and capacity building projects. Program funds are administered by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to over 120 qualified nonprofit organizations providing outreach and legal services and representation to California's immigrant communities.

In [2022](#), California's Immigration Legal Services Programs strengthened California's safety net for immigrants by providing legal representation to over a thousand children and adults facing deportation and providing legal services to tens of thousands of Californians applying for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Naturalization, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Asylum, U-Visas, T-Visas and other immigration remedies.

Governor Newsom's proposed state budget for 2024-25 cuts \$15.2 million in funding for immigration programs that provide legal services to thousands of California students, workers, individuals and families every year. It also discontinues funding for CHIRP, a critical program for one of our most vulnerable populations, unaccompanied minors which costs \$17.8 million. The proposed cuts will have a devastating impact on California families and the legal aid infrastructure that has been built with public investments to protect immigrant families.

- **The proposed cut of \$10 million to the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Immigration Legal Services Programs**, including equity projects, would eliminate the TPS program entirely. Thousands of Californians and their families will no longer be able to access immigration legal services – such as applying for work permits and protections from deportation – that have been available since fiscal year 2018 when the TPS program started.
- **The proposed cut of \$5.2 million to the California State University (CSU) Immigration Legal Services Project**, will slash the crucial legal services program by nearly 75%, which has assisted thousands of students, alumni, staff, faculty, and families with free immigration legal services and representation with DACA, TPS, Naturalization, family-based petitions, asylum, and deportation defense.
- **The discontinuation of the Children Holistic Immigration Representation Project (CHIRP) at \$17.8 million** which provides legal counsel, social workers and supportive services to unaccompanied minors across dozens of California counties would leave unaccompanied children in a precarious situation. Eliminating this vital program will place these children and youth at greater risk of instability and insecurity at a time when California continues to face an unprecedented influx of unaccompanied minors arriving in our state.

We thank the California Legislature and Governor for the state’s historic commitment and strong support for immigration legal services programs. Because of the devastating impact that the above cuts would have on our immigrant communities, we implore the Legislature to protect the \$15.2 million and reinvest \$17.8 million for California’s Immigration Legal Services Programs in the 2024-25 budget in the following manner:

- **Reject the \$15.2 million budget cut** to the CSU and TPS Immigration Legal Services Programs (ILSP) that thousands of California families, students, and workers rely on to access immigration legal services, in order to preserve the \$75M in ongoing state funding for California's Immigration Legal Services Programs.
- **Reinvest \$17.8 million** over two-years for the Children Holistic Immigration Representation Project (CHIRP) that hundreds of children and youth rely on to access immigration legal and social support services while facing deportation.

California’s Immigration Legal Services Programs need your support to protect the progress California has made to advance immigrants rights. Publicly funded legal services programs promote the security and stability of California families by providing legal services and representation to immigrant Californians, while in government custody or within our communities, who face deportation and family separation. We understand that the budget is a reflection of the state’s priorities. This is a critical time for California to stand by its historic investments in immigrant communities particularly as they face the possibility of renewed attacks with a change in the presidential administration, and as the current administration and Congress continue to use immigration and asylum as a bargaining chip in negotiations. With this in mind, California should be increasing — not decreasing — state funds for immigration legal services. If the federal political landscape is to become bleaker with greater anti-immigrant sentiment, we must ensure California policy continues to be anchored in protecting immigrants rights and promoting family unity.

If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Amavisca, Government Affairs Manager with the California Immigrant Policy Center, at [aamavisca@caimmigrant.org](mailto:aamavisca@caimmigrant.org). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Acacia Center for Justice  
ACCESS REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE  
ACLU California Action  
AHRI Center  
Alianza Sacramento  
Alliance for Boys and Men of Color  
Allies for Immigration Justice SLO County  
Asian Law Alliance  
Asian Pacific Islander Reentry and Inclusion through Support and Empowerment (API RISE)  
Buen Vecino  
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)  
California Alliance for Youth and Community Justice

California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice  
California Immigrant Policy Center  
California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance  
Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants  
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies  
Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law  
Center for Immigration Law and Policy, UCLA School of Law  
Central American Resource Center - CARECEN - of California  
Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative  
Centro del Inmigrante, Inc.  
Centro Legal de la Raza  
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice Ventura County (CLUE VC)  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, CHIRLA  
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice  
Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, Inc. (CAB)  
Council on American-Islamic Relations, California (CAIR-CA)  
CRLA Foundation  
East Bay Sanctuary Covenant  
Empowering Marginalized Asian Communities  
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)  
Ensuring Opportunity Campaign  
Esperanza Community Housing  
Fair Chance Project  
Faithful Friends  
Families United to End LOP - FUEL  
Friends Committee on Legislation of California  
Glenview Area Groups for Action  
Haitian Bridge Alliance  
Harbor Institute for Immigrant & Economic Justice  
Immigrant Defenders Law Center  
Immigrant Defense Advocates  
Immigrant Legal Defense  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)  
Immigration Institute of the Bay Area  
Initiate Justice  
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice  
Interfaith Refugee & Immigration Service  
La Maestra Community Health Centers  
La Raza Community Resource Center  
Matlin Legal  
Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)  
Nikkei Progressives  
OC Rapid Response Network  
People's Budget Orange County

Public Counsel  
Reimagine Richmond  
San Bernardino Community Service Center, Inc  
Santa Cruz Welcoming Network  
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)  
Social Justice Collaborative  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Survivors of Torture, International (San Diego)  
Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC)  
Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural & Bookstore  
TODEC Legal Center  
Transforming Justice Orange County  
Tsuru for Solidarity  
UFW Foundation  
Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry of California  
Vera Institute of Justice  
World Relief Southern California