



FROM THE OFFICE OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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SB 12 (Gonzalez) California Immigrant and Refugee Affairs Agency

SUMMARY

Senate Bill (SB) 12 will establish a central coordinating agency in state government to lead California's efforts in welcoming and fostering the integration and inclusion of immigrants and refugees in California.

EXISTING LAW

SB 84 (Budget, Chapter 25, Statutes of 2015) established the position of Statewide Director of Immigrant Integration, with the mission of serving as the lead for the planning and coordination of immigrant services and policies in California.

SB 79 (Budget, Chapter 20, Statutes of 2015) established the One California program, administered by the Department of Social Services. The One California program, subject to funding availability, provides grants to nonprofit organizations to provide immigration-related legal services, including the Youth Legal Services program and Immigrant Services Fund program, which provides aide to Californians applying for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA).

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM

California is home to 10.4 million immigrants, who account for 23% of the entire immigrant population in the United States.¹ This diverse population has been pivotal in shaping the Golden State into what it is today - with a

thriving economy that rivals other countries, and that is enriched by immigrant innovators and entrepreneurs.

Immigrant-led households in California paid \$80.8 billion in federal taxes and \$38.9 billion in state and local taxes in 2018. Undocumented Californians paid an estimated \$4.5 billion in federal taxes and \$2.5 billion in state and local taxes. Approximately 935,000 immigrant business owners in California accounted for 38% of all self-employed residents in 2018 and generated \$24.5 billion in revenue.²

Despite the outsized impact immigrants have on our economy and our workforce, California currently has limited statewide services and support systems for immigrants and refugees. Existing services, like the One California program, provide financial support directly to nonprofit community groups to deliver legal services to immigrant communities. Additionally, there are only two staff positions in the Governor's Office dedicated to immigrant policy issues for a state of 39 million people.

Outside of these small, but critical commitments, California has no dedicated entity or office to serve the nearly one-quarter of our population that are immigrants or refugees. States like New York, Colorado, Massachusetts, Nevada, and even the cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Santa Clara all have offices dedicated to developing programs, policies, and services for immigrants. California, however, the most populous state in the country, with an immigrant population

¹ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-immigrant-population-state-and-county>

² <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-california>.

dwarfing that of many other nations – has no dedicated office for immigrant issues and advocacy.

The incoming Trump Administration has promised to implement hostile actions against immigrant communities, including mass deportations and the unprecedented act of deploying the US Military to remove undocumented Americans. California must take an active and proactive role in defending our neighbors, family members, and community members from these malicious and heartless deportation threats.

Immigrants seeking new opportunities, and refugees fleeing violence or repression in their home countries, have become a central part of the diverse fabric of our state, and we owe it to these Californians to prepare an adequate response to any federal actions that seek to tear apart families and communities.

SOLUTION

SB 12 will address the lack of statewide leadership and action supporting California’s immigrant and refugee communities by creating the California Immigrant and Refugee Affairs Agency.

SB 12 will task this agency and its leadership with:

- ✓ Establishing a permanent structure within the state to serve immigrants and refugees;
- ✓ Creating a clearinghouse and referral system for services available to immigrants;
- ✓ Coordinating integration efforts among state agencies;
- ✓ Engaging stakeholders inside and outside of government on immigrant issues;
- ✓ Developing grant programs that directly support capacity building;
- ✓ Making policy recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature; and,
- ✓ Coordinating with local immigrant affairs offices to streamline services and maximize impact.

SUPPORT

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)

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