



Legislation Text

File #: RES 19-342, **Version:** 1

Approving the execution of the Joint Powers Agreement for Immigrant and Refugee Services.

Whereas, In the past several months, residents and community members have met with the City of Saint Paul and Ramsey County to discuss the impact that current federal immigration policies are having on immigrant and refugee communities. Federal policies are resulting in uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and family disruption that impact the wellbeing, prosperity, and overall opportunity of residents, businesses, and families in the City of Saint Paul;

Whereas, There has been a significant increase in immigration enforcement resulting in individuals being put in removal proceedings under the jurisdiction of the United States federal government. Because removal proceedings are civil - not criminal - the constitutional guarantee of the right to counsel is not applied to immigrants facing deportation;

Whereas, The Vera Institute of Justice's evaluation of universal representation in New York City, where all indigent immigrants are provided an attorney, projected a 1,100 percent increase in success rates compared to unrepresented individuals. Many of these clients were parents (primarily of children who are citizens of the United States) with longstanding ties to the United States. This success rate was further projected to result in \$2.7 million annually in local, state, and federal tax revenue for the cohort of clients studied in the evaluation see Vera's full evaluation of the New York City program at <https://www.vera.org/publications/new-yorkimmigrant-family-unity-project-evaluation>);

Whereas, According to the Vera Institute, only thirty-three percent of immigrants were represented by attorneys nationwide in 2017. Sixty-one percent of immigrants were represented by attorneys in Minnesota during the same period (see Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse [TRAC], "Individuals in Immigration Court by Their Address" at <http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/addressrep/>);

Whereas, These legal representation rates signify the people who are forced to defend themselves from deportation without the assistance of an attorney, dramatically decreasing the likelihood of a positive outcome. As of the most recently available data from September 2018 in Ramsey County, approximately twenty-nine percent of 957 pending cases are not represented by an attorney, leaving 283 Ramsey County residents to represent themselves in court (<http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/addressrep/>);

Whereas, The City of Saint Paul is the largest municipality within Ramsey County, and is the home to an important proportion of immigrants and refugees vulnerable to immigration proceedings. As of the most recently available data from September 2018 for the City of Saint Paul, 208 of the 707 pending cases are unrepresented, leaving these 208 Saint Paul residents to represent themselves in court (<http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/addressrep/>);

WHEREAS, The City of Saint Paul is committed to engaging the community and building trust across public services to ensure that long-term community prosperity is shared by all, and find that ensuring public safety requires that people including their family members and friends feel welcome and safe;

WHEREAS, The City of Saint Paul finds that providing immigrant and refugee legal services will stabilize families and community, encourage civil engagement and commitment, and improve the economic potential of immigrants and refugees;

WHEREAS, This Joint Powers Agreement will allow the City of Saint Paul to further collaborate with Ramsey County to improve the safety and stability of Saint Paul residents; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the City Council approves execution of the Joint Powers Agreement for Immigrant and Refugee Services attached to this resolution.