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• Santa Monica • Torrance Area • Whittier

May 12, 2020

Re: Item 2, Public Hearing on the 2020-2021 recommended budget and revisions. May 13, 2020 meeting

Dear Supervisors Kathryn Barger, Sheila Kuehl, Janice Hahn, Hilda Solis, and Mark Ridley-Thomas:

The League supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal, and right to humane treatment. In achieving overall policy goals, the League does not support deporting unauthorized immigrants who have no history of criminal activity.

On behalf of League of Women Voters of Los Angeles County, I am writing to express my full support for the recommended allocation by the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) in the County budget to ensure the continued operation of the Los Angeles Justice Fund (LAJF) for current and new cases, as well as to support DCBA's own recommendation to amend their report to ensure funds are not simply restricted to only current cases.

Today, in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, LAJF attorneys continue doing the work. Despite our call to the federal government to free all individuals from detention, that has not been the case. In fact, in opposition to our demands, detention centers like Adelanto are actually still considering expanding their number of beds[3]. As a result, we write to respectfully urge your support for the funding allocated for the LAJF to ensure the protection of non-citizen Angelenos caught in the deportation machine.

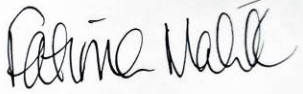
With nearly 3.5 million immigrants living in Los Angeles County it is imperative local governments respond to the needs our population is facing today. Amongst the many challenges is the lack of legal representation for immigration matters. Since 2017, in Los Angeles County multiple Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), removal operations have taken place. Currently Los Angeles County is the 6th County in the country where ICE arrests are heavily concentrated.[1] Unlike criminal proceedings, individuals in the immigration system are not provided court-appointed counsel to assist and represent them in their case. In Los Angeles County approximately 68% of detained individuals and 26% of non-detained individuals lacked legal counsel. Evidently detained and released immigrants in Los Angeles who had legal counsel were five times more likely to win their case than those without legal representation. Among non-detained immigrants who had access to legal representation were four times more likely to win their case than those whom were unrepresented.[2]

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It is important to note that the LAJF has been critical in responding and spearheading efforts to mitigate the inhumane policies of the current Administration. LAJF attorneys and advocates have provided and can continue to provide support and respite, as they are on the ground, in detention centers, and in immigration courts tracking cases, seeing the changing policies, and developing real-time solutions that can be best-practice models for others facing similar circumstances.

We write to respectfully urge your support for the funding allocated for the LAJF to ensure the protection of non-citizen Angelenos caught in the deportation machine.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fatima Malik". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fatima Malik, President
League of Women Voters of Los Angeles County

(2 pages enclosed)

[1] Counties Where ICE Arrests Concentrate October 2018, trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/533/.

[2]<https://law.yale.edu/system/files/area/center/liman/document/access-to-counsel-calif-coalition-report-2016-06.pdf>

[3]<https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/politics/immigration/2020/04/22/adelanto-postpones-hearing-geo-proposal-expand-detention-center/3009016001/>