



Legislation Text

File #: 1558-2021, **Version:** 1

This ordinance authorizes the City Clerk to enter into a grant agreement with Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. for the purpose of providing legal services for immigrant and refugee families in Central Ohio.

Columbus City Council established the Columbus Families Together Fund (CFTF) in 2017 to protect immigrant and refugee families in Central Ohio from the long-term financial and emotional devastation that results from aggressive deportation. The CFTF will provide \$375,000.00 total over three years to organizations that meet specified legal services needs within the immigrant and refugee communities, with \$375,000.00 allocated by the City of Columbus.

The Columbus City Council solicited proposals from nonprofit legal service providers in the Central Ohio area to receive a grant of \$300,000.00 from CFTF to provide a Legal Orientation Program (LOP) to educate detained persons on their rights under immigration law and also to provide direct legal representation to detained immigrants in removal proceedings in the Cleveland Immigration Court in Cleveland, Ohio, for those persons who meet the program's eligibility criteria.

One grant application was received for the LOP & Direct Legal Representation Grant. A review committee of five immigration experts reviewed the grant application and recommended that Columbus City Council award the LOP & Direct Legal Representation Grant of \$300,000.00 to Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc.

Fiscal Impact: Funding is available within the Public Safety Initiatives subfund.

Emergency action is requested in order to immediately provide resources to Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. to avoid any delay in the provision of necessary legal services for the immigrant and refugee communities.

To authorize the City Clerk to enter into a grant agreement with Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. for the purpose of providing legal services for immigrant and refugee families in relation to Columbus Families Together Fund; to authorize an appropriation and expenditure within the Public Safety Initiatives subfund; and to declare an emergency. (\$300,000.00)

WHEREAS, Columbus prides itself on being a diverse city where more than 10 percent of the city's residents are foreign-born, the Somali population is the second largest in the nation, and nearly half of all refugees settled in Ohio are settled in Franklin County; and

WHEREAS, aggressive deportation tactics tear deported parents from their children, inducing permanent financial strains on families, placing children into the foster care system, and unnecessarily burdening state and local resources for the long run; and

WHEREAS, many immigrants who do not have lawful immigration status nonetheless have meritorious claims to remain in the United States, including asylum, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, cancellation of removal, waivers of unlawful presence, or other legal forms of relief that could prevent deportations and the resulting harms to family members and the Columbus community; and

WHEREAS, legal representation is the most decisive factor in the outcome of immigration cases, yet it is woefully out of reach for low-income immigrants in particular; and

WHEREAS, Columbus Families Together Fund provides resources to expand access to legal counsel which is critical to immigrant families' ability to navigate the judicial system and effectively plead their case before the immigration court; and

WHEREAS, the proposal submitted by Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. for Columbus Families Together Fund's Legal Orientation Program and Direct Legal Representation grant that was the most comprehensive, was able to be fully implemented in the quickest amount of time, and demonstrated the organizations similar previous experience; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists such that it is immediately necessary to authorize the City Clerk to enter into a grant agreement with Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. to avoid any delay in the provision of necessary legal services for the immigrant and refugee communities in order to preserve the public peace, property, and health or safety; now, therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That the City Clerk is hereby authorized to enter into a grant agreement with Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. for the purpose of providing legal services for immigrant and refugee families in relation to Columbus Families Together Fund.

SECTION 2. That the City Auditor is hereby authorized and directed to appropriate \$300,000.00 in the Public Safety Initiatives subfund, fund 1000, subfund 100016, to Columbus City Council, in Object Class 03 - Contractual Services, per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

See Attached File: 1558-2021.xls

SECTION 3. That the expenditure of \$300,000.00 or so much thereof as may be needed pursuant to the actions authorized in SECTION 1, is hereby authorized in the Public Safety Initiatives subfund, fund 1000, subfund 100016, in Object Class 03 - Contractual Services, per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

See Attached File: 1558-2021.xls

SECTION 4. That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications associated with this legislation.

SECTION 5. That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor, or 10 days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.