

Communication from Public

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Date Submitted: 01/19/2022 01:58 PM

Council File No: 17-0046-S2

Comments for Public Posting: My name is Talia Inlender. I am a resident of Council District 13 and the Deputy Director of the Center for Immigration Law and Policy at UCLA School of Law. Before transitioning to my current role, I spent 13 years at Public Counsel where I launched and managed the agency's work on behalf of immigrants incarcerated by immigration authorities in the LA area, including through the LA Justice Fund. There is no dispute that the pilot program saved lives and kept families in our community together. It provided critical legal screenings and advice, full representation, and secured release from detention and long-term legal status at rates that far exceed that of people forced to "go it alone" in immigration proceedings. The program remains urgently needed. Earlier this week, statistics released by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) revealed explosive growth in the number of cases being filed in immigration court by the Biden administration: 800,000 new cases are expected to be received this year—at least 300,000 more than the annual total the Court has ever received since its inception. In our immigrant rich city, that means more Angelenos facing removal proceedings than ever before. Yet the City is dragging its feet. The time to act is now. LA County has already recognized this and set in motion a new and improved version of the LA Justice Fund that will be permanent and accessible to all, regardless of criminal history. These changes will improve the program's efficiency and, most importantly, ensure that it comports with our values as a community committed to recognizing and eliminating racial injustice in our society: injustice that is historically rooted in our criminal and immigration systems, and whose effects continue to play out today. Immigrants of color are racially profiled, criminalized, and then funneled into the immigration detention and deportation system with Black migrants, in particular, disproportionately impacted. The proposed program model – supported by a broad community coalition and adopted by the County – recognizes this racial inequity, and strengthens this critical program. This Committee should lead the way for the rest of the Council by voting unanimously in favor of continuing and strengthening the LA Justice Fund for immigrant – and all – Angelenos.