

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Kelly Young

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**Council File No:** 17-0046-S2

**Comments for Public Posting:** Dear Councilmember, My name is Kelly Young, and I am a constituent. I strongly urge you to strengthen and expand the LA Justice Fund when it is heard in the Budget and Finance Committee this coming Monday, Feb. 28th. Specifically, I would like you to support the recommendations coming out of the Jan. 20th hearing of the Immigrant Affairs, Civil Rights, and Equity Committee where they approved the following recommendations from the CLA report: Recommendation 1A: the City to move in tandem with County Recommendation 2B: to fund existing and new cases Recommendation 3B: to remove the criminal exclusions The City has already earmarked funds for this effort, but has not used those funds, yet. In the meanwhile, in all this time, immigrant Angelenos continue to face attacks from the federal immigration system. Therefore, we urge you to act now to ensure that the City takes action to protect immigrant Angelenos by making the LA Justice Fund a true universal representation program that provides due process for all. Expanding the LA Justice Fund to include all immigrants, regardless of background, is a necessary and important step for racial justice in LA. Excluding those with criminal records from representation only serves to further marginalize the most overpoliced members of our community. Also, the current criminal exclusions actually increase the program's administrative costs and overhead. A person's criminal history is not immediately apparent, and often requires extensive research, including consultation with courthouses and public defenders, collecting and reviewing records (sometimes from multiple jurisdictions) which individuals often do not have, and conducting legal research to determine whether the conviction falls within a prohibited category. In the Los Angeles Justice Fund pilot program, 1,300 screenings were conducted for applicants ultimately deemed ineligible, with at least one provider estimating that their attorneys spent up to 25% to 30% of their time on screening for criminal history during the pilot program, taking nearly one full day of work for an attorney. This means that legal service providers in the pilot program spent an estimated 9,100 hours conducting screenings for ineligible applicants. That is 9,100 hours that could have been spent on representation. It is worth noting, however, that despite the burden of time spent on determining criminal status, LAJF grantees still

served 742 clients, exceeding the goal of 500 cases set in the pilot. Thus, eliminating the criminal carveouts is necessary to make the best use of the City's funding as it would significantly reduce the amount of time and resources spent on screenings as opposed to the critical work of representation and, in fact, allow LAJF to be even more efficient and even more of a success than it already has been. The County of Los Angeles, as well as cities and counties across the country, have already recognized these facts and adopted universal representation programs to protect their immigrant communities, as outlined in this link from the Vera Institute of Justice. It is time for Los Angeles, the city of immigrants, to show strong leadership and do the same. An editorial in La Opinion, from February 16th, supports this step as critical to ensuring justice and due process for all. So, again, I urge you to support the recommendations of the Immigrant Affairs, Civil Rights, and Equity (IACRE) committee, which approved the CLA report's recommendations 1A, 2B, and 3B. That committee voted on 1/20/22 to continue and strengthen the immigrant representation program while eliminating criminal history exclusions, in order to give all Angelenos the fair process they are due. I call on the Budget and Finance committee to not stand in the way of this necessary progress and do the same. Thank you.