

## Communication from Public

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**Comments for Public Posting:** Dear Los Angeles City Council, I am writing to express my full support for, and urge you to approve, item 5 to ensure the continued operation of the Los Angeles Justice Fund (LAJF) for current and new cases in the City of Los Angeles. We urge you to approve this item, including supporting language to ensure the increased flexibility to serve all eligible cases, current and new, which also ensures increased efficiency in use of funds to maximize the benefit to our immigrant communities. With nearly 3.5 million immigrants living in Los Angeles and growing numbers of COVID 19 positive cases in California detention centers, including the GEO Adelanto ICE Processing Center where most LA residents are transferred to, it is imperative that the Los Angeles City Council approved funding today with no restrictions on taking on new cases. Amongst the many challenges that the immigrant community faces as a result of the COVID 19 is the increased likeliness of being sent to inhumane and medically unsafe detention centers if our city does not take action for the long-haul. As COVID-19 rages on, the Los Angeles City Council should and must not deny legal representation to new cases. The Trump Administration has built an expanded deportation machine, as well as a culture of hate and racism in our community, that will last long after (and if) Trump is someday gone. Since 2017, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has continued removal operations in Los Angeles. 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 who were unrepresented. It is important to note that the LAJF has been critical in responding and spearheading efforts to mitigate the draconian and inhumane policies of the Trump 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. Both the CAO and the independent evaluation team, VERA, report that not only has LAJF met expectations, but also exceeded them AND that there still remains a critical need for this program to protect immigrant Angelenos. We need the LAJF renewed at its full level of \$1 million to ensure a just recovery for all Angelenos and to counter this administration's cruel detention and deportation machine. Today, in the middle of a 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 complete opposite, detention centers like Adelanto are still considering expanding their number of beds. 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. We cannot stand by and watch our neighbors and families torn apart when we know that we have the ability to do something to protect them. Thank you.