



Assemblymember Lisa Calderon, 57th District

AB 1368 – Enhanced Services Program for Asylees

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill 1368 establishes the Enhanced Services Program for Asylees (ESPA) within the State Department of Social Services. The ESPA will offer case management services for individuals granted asylum, ensuring they receive culturally competent and responsive case management for up to 90 days.

BACKGROUND

Refugees and individuals granted asylum, or asylees, have legal protection statuses since they cannot return to their home country due to threat of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.¹ Refugees differ from asylees as they start seeking refuge while they are still in their home country, whereas asylees are given their classification upon arrival to the United States – both however, meet the same legal standards for classification.

Prior to 2017, the U.S granted asylum to an average of about 20,000 people every year. In recent years however, there has been an increase of individuals granted asylum. Between 2017 and 2020, the number of individuals granted asylum has increased from 26,199 to 46,508, representing a growth of 56 percent.² In 2019, California affirmatively granted asylum to 34% of all new asylees – highest in the nation. New Jersey came in second, granting asylum to just 9.3%.³

As of February 2021, President Joe Biden’s administration has ended the Migrant Protection Protocols implemented by President Donald Trump. The policy, commonly referred to as the “Remain in Mexico” program, restricted individuals seeking asylum via the U.S./Mexico border while they waited for their immigration court hearings to begin, requiring they stay in Mexico.⁴

PROBLEM

Every year, thousands are granted affirmative asylum status in our state, with a path to citizenship and eligibility for a wide range of benefits, including Medi-Cal, CalFresh and Covered California. While

both refugees and asylees should have access to these programs, assistance is not equally available to them. Upon arriving to the U.S., refugees are assigned a caseworker to help connect them with the benefits they are eligible for. This initial connection with a caseworker is not made for asylees, resulting in asylees having to navigate the complicated social services system alone.

Unfortunately, due to the absence of adequate support and lack of a culturally responsive program, most new asylees do not receive these benefits despite profound need. As expected, not having the support of case management service makes it all the more difficult for asylees to integrate into their new community. There should not be an inequity of support based on when a person seeks asylum from their home country.

SOLUTION

AB 1368 remedies these problems by funding and designing the ESPA. This program will increase the resources available to resettlement agencies, allowing caseworkers to assist asylees in addition to refugees. The ESPA will be predicated on providing culturally appropriate case management services for up to 90 days after the grant of asylum, and with it access to all the benefits in which they are lawfully entitled to.

SUPPORT

CAIR California (Co-Sponsor)
HAIS (Co-Sponsor)
Partnership for New Americans (Co-Sponsor)
Access California
ACLU of California
Adelanto Visitation and Advocacy Network
Alliance for African Assistance
American Jewish Committee
Anti-Defamation League
Armenian Relief Society of Western USA, Social Services
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - California
Beacon Presbyterian Fellowship, Oakland
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists, Social Justice Committee

¹ American Immigration Council. (2020, June 11). *Asylum in the United States*. <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/asylum-united-states>

² United States Department of Homeland Security. (2020, October 22). *Refugees and Asylees*. Department of Homeland Security. <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/refugees-asylees>

³ U.S Department of Homeland Security, & Baugh, R. B. (2020, September). Annual Flow Report: Refugees and Asylees: 2019. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2019/refugee_and_asylee_2019.pdf

⁴ Alvarez, P. G. S. A. M. S. (2021, February 11). *Immigration: Biden prepares rollback of Trump-era “Remain in Mexico” policy for migrants - CNNPolitics*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/11/politics/immigration-southern-border/index.html>

Bet Tzedek
Burma Refugee Families & Newcomers
California Immigrant Policy Center
Catholic Charities San Francisco, San Mateo, Marin
Counties
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Congregation of The Presbytery of San Francisco
Courage California
Desert Support for Asylum Seekers
East Bay Refugee and Immigrant Forum
Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles
Equality California
Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project, Catholic
Charities of Los Angeles INC.
First Congregational Church of Palo Alto, UCC
First Congressional Church
Florin Japanese American Citizens League -
Sacramento Valley
Home for Refugees
IKAR
Immigrant Defenders Law Center
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice
Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective
International Institute of Los Angeles
International Rescue Committee
Jewish Center for Justice
Jewish Coalition Assisting Refugees and Immigrants -
Los Angeles (JCARI-LA)
Jewish Community Relations Council of San
Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda
and Contra Costa Counties
Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
Jewish World Watch
Justice & Compassion Ministries, California-Pacific
Korean Community Center of The East Bay
Leo Baeck Temple
Los Angeles LGBT Center
NextGen California
Open Door Legal
Opening Doors, INC.
Or Hamidbar
Orange County Equality Coalition
Orange County Jewish Coalition for Refugees
OXFAM America
Pars Equality Center
PICO California
Program for Torture Victims

Public Counsel
Refugee Forum of Los Angeles
SEIU-USWW
Soccer Without Borders
Temple Israel of Hollywood
Tiyya
United Church of Christ, Oc INC.
We are All America
Whittier Latino Coalition
Women for American Values and Ethics Action Fund
World Relief Southern California

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