



Legislation Text

File #: 2020-0678, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): County Counsel
Staff Name and Phone Number: Bruce Goldstein, 707-565-2421
Vote Requirement: Informational Only
Supervisorial District(s): All

Title:

Receive a Report on the Sonoma County Secure Families Fund

Recommended Action:

- A) Receive an update on the Sonoma County Secure Families Collaborative's legal and other wrap-around services.
- B) Receive an update on the Collaborative's actions after the Supreme Court's Decision on DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)

Executive Summary:

Since its inception in November 2018, the Sonoma County Secure Families Collaborative has assisted 512 of Sonoma County's most vulnerable immigrants by providing quality legal services, mental health access, benefit enrollment assistance, and other social services. The Collaborative has been successful, with a 97% success rate of all cases.

The Collaborative is the only non-profit in Sonoma County that provides *pro bono* removal defense for Sonoma County immigrants. In Sonoma County alone, there are an estimated 83,300 immigrants, 40,000 undocumented people, and 120,000 residents that have an immediate family or household member that is without legal status. The 2017 Sonoma Complex Fire, the 2019 Kincade Fire, and the current COVID-19 pandemic, together, have greatly exacerbated the needs of our local immigrant community. We are proud to report on how the County has increased the capacity of our local organizations to provide legal and social services to this community, who are an integral part of our socioeconomic framework.

Your Board's financial leadership has been essential in drawing funds from the philanthropic community and other local governments.

Discussion:

Background

In 2018, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors established the Sonoma County Secure Families Collaborative to meet the needs of our community's increased challenges due to the changes in federal immigration policy and the North Bay wildfires. The Collaborative's purpose is to increase the capacity of local

immigration legal service organizations for immigrants in Sonoma County by enhancing their legal safety net, ensuring that families are safe and remain together, and enhancing the culturally-responsive provision of vital social and mental health services, while simultaneously promoting a sustainable model that can be exported to other communities.

Core partners of the Collaboration include VIDAS Legal Services, the Immigration and Deportation Defense Clinic at the University of San Francisco (USF), Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa, Humanidad Therapy & Education Services, the North Bay Organizing Project (NBOP), and the Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) and its DREAM Center. This network of non-profits work together to meet the Collaborative's goals and the community's needs.

The Collaborative is funded by the Sonoma County Secure Families Fund, which was initially established to raise the \$2 million needed to fund low- and no-cost immigration legal and social services over a three year period. One key component to early fundraising efforts was your Board's leadership and commitment of \$100,000 per year for three years made as part of the FY17-18 budget process. That three year period has expired and fundraising must continue to support these invaluable community services. As part of the FY 2020 -19 Budget Hearings, your Board approved a 4th year of funding for FY 2020-21. Your Board's commitment of \$100,000 for the next fiscal year will assure that these services can continue for all immigrants in our community.

Current Report

The Collaborative has been highly successful, with 97% of represented clients having achieved their desired outcome, or their case is currently pending. Current data suggests that the "average" Secure Families client is a young woman from Mexico, who is between the ages of 18-24 and currently living in Santa Rosa.

In Year Two, the Collaborative will build on its first year success making more secure over 100 Sonoma County immigrant families through the provision of high quality legal services and integrated supportive social services. Year 2 will see the expansion of legal services to an additional 50 families and the expansion of social, and especially mental health services to Collaborative clients. Staff will also continue their work to strengthen the network and improve coordination of services county-wide to our immigrant communities with a special emphasis on reaching out to employer associations. The Collaborative's hallmark, however, will continue to be expert *pro bono* removal defense and other immigration legal services to the roughly 35,000 undocumented immigrants who are such a critical part of Sonoma County.

Lessons from Year One directly shape Year Two goals and priorities to provide even more tailored services to Sonoma County's undocumented community. New goals include developing trauma-informed mental health support (with a particular focus on our young clients), expanding geographic diversity to increase service reach into Sonoma Valley and/or Petaluma, and adding training and rapid response networking resources through collaboration with the North Bay Organizing Project (NBOP).

In Year Two the Collaborative continues to evolve by adding new partners Humanidad Therapy & Education

Services, the Santa Rosa Junior College Counseling Center (SRJC), and the North Bay Organizing Project (NBOP), while streamlining our organizational structure by designating VIDAS as the single anchor “lead” organization. At the same time, Year 1 Collaborative partners, the Immigration and Deportation Defense Clinic at the University of San Francisco (USF) and Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa (CCDSR) continue to play central roles.

To date, there have been a total of 263 cases (241 leads and 271 derivatives) that have assisted 512 individuals, including 89 removal defense cases, the majority of which are asylum seekers fleeing violence in their home countries in Central America or Mexico, and 174 cases seeking immigration legal services. With continued funding, by 2021, the Collaborative will have provided services to over two percent of ALL Sonoma County non-citizen immigrants.

The DACA Decision

The current administration’s immigration policies were designed to instill fear and instability. One example of this was the attempt to rescind the 2012 created DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program, which allows undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States prior to their 16th birthday, to receive protection from deportation and permission to work. A decision on this landmark case came down in June, 2020 in *DHS v. Regents of the University of California*.

The Supreme Court ruled that the Trump Administration’s attempt to terminate DACA was improper, and that, for now, DACA recipients are allowed to remain in this country. This means that DACA recipients are currently protected from deportation, are authorized to work, and can apply for two-year extensions on their DACA status. While this decision was welcome news for immigrants and their supporters everywhere, the Court’s ruling essentially provided a path to properly rescind DACA. The services that the Collaborative provides are now more important than ever for DACA recipients.

The Collaborative was preparing for the worst case scenario and was readying to provide the approximately 4,000 young professionals in Sonoma County who are DACA recipients with free consultation about their cases to uncover a path to a more permanent solution to current immigration status. Assisting this population is also critical to supporting the County and community’s emergency response to COVID, as many of the bilingual, bicultural professionals on whom we rely to provide culturally responsive services to address the disproportionate number of COVID-19 cases in the Latinx and indigenous language speaking communities are DACA recipients. Since the favorable ruling came down, the Collaborative continues to provide free access to immigration services and consultations, and is organizing a series of engagement events to spread the word about the availability of these services. Shortly after the Supreme Court’s decision was published, the Collaborative provided an analysis of the Court’s decision and its ramifications on the Latinx and Equity Task Force that Supervisor Gore is convening, and announced the screening and service provision effort focused on DACA recipients.

To adequately protect our immigrant community, the Fund recognizes its responsibility to continue to increase

local legal capacity. Your Board's invaluable contributions have allowed the Collaborative to do just that. Your commitment has not only increased the Collaborative's scope and capacity, but has provided clients with life-changing support.

Prior Board Actions:

June 16, 2017: Approval of a \$100,000 donation per year for 3 years to the Sonoma County Secure Families Fund from the Graton Mitigation Fund.

August 22, 2017: Authorized County Counsel to execute a Fund Agreement and serve on an Advisory Committee with the Community Foundation Sonoma County to create the Sonoma County Secure Families Fund to raise and disburse funds to increase the capacity of Sonoma County non-profits to provide low- and no-cost immigration legal services and education.

April 18, 2018: Receive an update on the Sonoma County Secure Families Fund's efforts to raise and disburse funds to increase the capacity of Sonoma County non-profits to provide low-and no-cost immigration legal services and education.

June 14, 2020: Board approved \$100,000 of funding to Secure Families Fund for FY 2020-21.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 19-20 Adopted	FY20-21 Projected	FY 21-22 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$100,000	\$100,000	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$100,000	\$100,000	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	\$100,000	\$100,000	
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$100,000	\$100,000	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The Board allocated \$100,000 for FY 2020-21 as part of the FY 2019-20 Budget Hearings. Funds appropriated for FY 20/21 will come from the Graton Mitigation Fund - Non-Guarantee In-Lieu TOT budget.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

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Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Attachments:

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

Community Foundation Sonoma County Fund Agreement.