

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL**

OCTOBER 5, 2021

**Supporting Haitian Immigrants and their Families**

The Haitian people witnessed the assassination of their president in July 2021, a devastating earthquake in August 2021, and a direct hit from major tropical storm Grace in August 2021. Prior to the assassination, the people of Haiti had already suffered through years of violent street protests over corruption, which devastated trust in government and widened opportunity for increasingly powerful criminal gangs to gain more control. For a nation already embroiled in political chaos, the assassination of its president immediately created a deeper power vacuum that has now sent the nation into a dangerously volatile phase. For many Haitians, personal safety is under constant threat and at jeopardy today more than ever.

These devastating events struck a people that was still struggling to recover from the catastrophic 2010 earthquake that according to World Vision took as many as 250,000 lives, left 300,000 people injured, and displaced 1.5 million people. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([UN OCHA](#)), “The compounded effects of an ongoing political crisis, socio-economic challenges, food insecurity and gang violence continue to greatly worsen an already precarious

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MOTION

MITCHELL	_____
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BARGER	_____
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humanitarian situation. Some 4.4 million people, or nearly 46 percent of the population, face acute food insecurity, including 1.2 million who are in emergency levels and 3.2 million people at crisis levels. An estimated 217,000 children suffer from moderate-to-severe acute malnutrition.”

In addition, Haitians continue to suffer from the COVID-19 pandemic. Haiti did not receive [any vaccines until July 13](#), 2021, just one month before the earthquake. As a result, as of mid-September 2021, only [21 percent of Haitian residents](#) had received one dose, and only 16 percent had been fully vaccinated. The pandemic situation is so dire that state of emergency declarations have been issued in the most impacted areas.

Irrefutably, life is very challenging for Haitian people. UN OCHA reports that, “As access to food and purchasing power declines, nearly 1 million people – about 45 percent of the population – will experience high levels of acute food insecurity between September 2021 and February 2022,” including nearly 320,000 people who will face an emergency situation.

It is therefore understandable that many Haitian people, in their resiliency and desperation, have made the wrenching decision to leave their country in search of a safer home for themselves and their families. Since the middle of September 2021, multiple media outlets have been reporting about thousands of Haitian migrants camping under the international bridge in the city of Del Rio, Texas. On September 18, 2021, the United States (U.S.) Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the federal government's strategy to address the rapidly deteriorating situation. On September 24, 2021, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas reported that all migrants had been cleared from under the Del Rio international bridge. The Federal government has since reported that the majority of the families and children camping under the Del Rio international bridge were allowed to enter the United States. According to Secretary Mayorkas, about 12,400 migrants were released into the U.S. with a Notice to Appear in immigration court to begin the immigration process that will determine whether or not they will be allowed to remain in the country. DHS is still processing about 5,000 migrants, and about 8,000 migrants chose to return to Mexico rather than risk removal from the U.S. to Haiti. Additionally, DHS has deported about 2,000 migrants back to Haiti under the

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controversial Title 42 public health authority. Images of U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents on horseback charging and chasing Haitian migrants, whips in hand, have evoked the public's and advocates' anger and protests.

Many Haitian immigrants who took the long and often life-threatening journey through South and Central America to reach the U.S.-Mexico border hoping to be admitted into the U.S. are now being turned back to the unstable, and potentially dangerous country they had fled. And those who were admitted into the U.S. are left facing a difficult, complex, lengthy and uncertain legal journey to fight for the opportunity to stay here.

The Los Angeles County (County) Board of Supervisors has adopted numerous policies to welcome and support all immigrants who chose to make this County their home. We must, therefore, support Haitian immigrants and their families who come to the County so they can thrive and make the County a better place for us all. Furthermore, we must let President Biden's administration know that we stand behind all efforts to support Haitian immigrants to stay and thrive in the U.S. and that we strongly condemn any inequitable actions, policies, and processes that may unfairly impact their rights and wellbeing.

**I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS** instruct the Executive Director of the Office of Immigrant Affairs in the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs, in collaboration with the Directors of the departments of Mental Health, Public Social Services, Health Services and all other relevant Los Angeles County (County) departments and community-based stakeholders to:

1. Identify wraparound support services that can be provided to Haitian immigrants and their families, including medical and mental health care, workforce development, and immigration legal assistance.
2. Develop and implement a plan (including culturally sensitive outreach strategies) to provide the above services to Haitian immigrants and their families.

**I FURTHER MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS** direct the Chief Executive Office Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs branch to send a 5-

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signature letter to United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken informing him that the Board of Supervisors of the County stands ready to work with the federal government to welcome and support Haitian immigrants and their families.

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(CG/YV)