

June 27, 2023

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN**

**Refugee Employment and Acculturation Services (REAS) Capacity Enhancements**

Numerous global conflicts such as the war in Ukraine, persecutions in Afghanistan, and civil unrest in Cuba, have resulted in an increase of refugee entrants into the United States, with Los Angeles County (County) experiencing an unprecedented increase of refugees and humanitarian parolees seeking resettlement. Additionally, as of March 2023, there were nearly 8,550 approved Uniting for Ukraine financial supporters from the County, which have resulted in approximately 2,500 Ukrainian citizens and non-citizen adult recipients seeking benefits and services from the County's Department of Public Social Services (DPSS).

The County is committed to assisting refugees to resettle and re-establish their lives in our community. The DPSS Refugee Employment Program (REP) is designed to provide culturally and linguistically sensitive resettlement and supportive services, including employment training and placement to assist refugees and their families adapt to their new home, learn English, find employment, and ultimately achieve self-sufficiency and economic mobility.

REP services are provided to refugees through the Refugee Employment and Acculturation Services (REAS) contract with JVS SoCal which was approved with an effective date of November 1, 2022. The REAS contract was based on a projected number of 1,000 cases. However, the new influx of refugees has far exceeded the projections, stretching

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resources beyond what was anticipated.

DPSS has identified funding to address this, and JVS SoCal has agreed to expand its partnership with the County to meet these immediate needs. This alone will not resolve the issue in the long-term, as ongoing global instability will continue to result in more refugees coming to County. Increased funding from the State of California would enable us to add additional service providers to meet this challenge. While the State is aware of our concerns, they have not made a commitment to increase funding for refugee services. Advocating for these resources is essential, in order to continue to offer safe refuge to those who face significant danger in their own countries and are seeking a better life here in County.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Director of the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) to prepare and execute a contract amendment augmenting the Refugee Employment and Acculturation Services (REAS) contract with JVS SoCal by \$1,930,688 to immediately address the needs of a growing refugee population.

**I, FURTHER, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors delegate authority to the Director of DPSS, or her designee, to prepare and execute a new sole source agreement with Catholic Charities of Los Angeles to supplement JVS' effort in serving the growing REAS caseload in an amount not to exceed \$2.5 million and subject to the identification of available funding; the approval of County Counsel; and upon contract execution, notifying the Board within ten business days after execution.

**I, FURTHER, MOVE** that the Director of DPSS work in consultation with the Chief

Executive Officer to identify additional sources of funding to effectively expand refugee services, including advocacy in Sacramento, in Washington DC and to explore the possible utilization of American Recovery Act funding for this purpose.

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