



**Date:** September 7, 2021

**To:** Wanda S. Page, City Manager  
**Through:** Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager  
**From:** Constance Stancil, Director, Neighborhood Improvement Services  
**Subject:** City/County Interlocal Agreement: Immigrant/Refugee Affairs

**Executive Summary**

Durham’s immigrant and refugee communities, including persons with Special Immigrant Visas (SIV), are continuing to grow. Church World Services, one of the region’s immigrant and refugee advocacy organizations, estimates that 350 immigrant and refugees will settle in the Triangle area in FY22; a large percentage of which are expected to settle in Durham. City Council approved funding to better equip Durham with resources to serve its immigrant and refugee communities. This innovative maneuver includes the installation of a new FTE whose primary function is to facilitate the successful integration of immigrants and refugees into Durham’s civic, economic, and cultural life experiences. This is a joint Durham City-County position. Operationally, the role is housed in the Community Engagement Division of Neighborhood Improvement Services. Therefore, it is necessary to enter into a formal interlocal agreement with Durham County for a percentage of the funding to support staffing and operational expenses.

**Motion**

To resolve that the City Manager be authorized to execute the Durham City-County Immigrant/Refugee Affairs Interlocal Agreement (ILA) with Durham County regarding the City/County Refugee and Immigrant Affairs staffing and operations.

**Background**

The Recovery and Renewal Task Force (RRTF), a joint City/County body, was formed to engage with community partners, experts, and local businesses in order to provide our elected leaders with actionable guidance and advice related to COVID-19. Task Force members engaged with roundtables throughout the process to further advance ideas. This included organizing an Immigrant & Refugee Roundtable to help inform and design recovery plans for these communities. Immigrant & Refugee Roundtable leaders were availed the opportunity to hear the communities’ concerns and their recommended solutions. At the conclusion of their work, the Immigrant & Refugee Roundtable, on behalf of RRTF, requested that Durham’s City and County Governments create a joint staff position that would work as the bridge between the City of Durham, Durham County and the immigrant and refugee communities. This position would build upon the Task Force’s multilingual communication, education, and leadership development efforts, providing a vital and consistent platform for immigrant and refugee communities to bring up issues they face. Both municipalities approved their respective budget proposals to install a joint permanent, full-time staff person.

## Issues and Analysis

The U.S. Census Bureau uses the term “foreign born” to refer to anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth. This includes immigrants and refugees. According to [Census data](#), there are over 44,000 foreign born residents in Durham, of which, about 11,000 speak a language other than English or Spanish. The majority of Durham’s foreign born residents migrated from Latin America; the second most populous foreign born residents are from Asia.

Durham’s immigrant and refugee communities face unique challenges. Some of the challenges were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, while others existed prior to COVID and will linger when the pandemic ends. Such challenges include language barriers, orientating to American culture, securing safe and affordable housing, and access to health. Studies show that health-related outcomes for immigrants and refugees are contingent on their success in overcoming these and other challenges.

The [2020 Durham County Health Assessment](#) (Assessment), a culmination of research and analysis by the Durham County Health Department, Duke Health and the multiple organizations that comprise the Partnership for a Healthy Durham, includes information about immigrant and refugee health concerns and recommended strategies to address them. According to the Assessment, “refugees often have complex health needs due to traumatic experiences, unhealthy living conditions, and disrupted access to healthcare.” Furthermore, “at least half of all refugees experience mental health concerns, resulting in higher healthcare costs, persistent and severe psychological morbidity and worse acculturation outcomes for refugees than their non-refugee peers.” The Assessment further noted that immigrants and refugees tend to experience:

- “Higher rates of depression, anxiety, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to toxic stress, work and finances, the political climate, immigration raids, and loss of hope in the U.S immigration system (e.g., to allow family reunification);
- Increased rates of other complex and chronic illnesses such as diabetes;
- Difficulty navigating health care services due to language barriers among households with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), or functional illiteracy (verbal and/or written);
- Legal barriers to health insurance coverage and public benefits;
- Financial barriers to care. Undocumented-headed households are more likely than their documented peers to live in poverty and be uninsured;
- Lack of access to specialty care, as safety-net community clinics in Durham do not provide most types of specialty care. PADC specialty care resources are limited;
- Heightened mistrust in government authorities, including fears around Public Charge and concerns that undocumented family members might be identified and reported to immigration authorities if someone uses public programs; [and]
- Low insurance coverage among children. Citizen children of at least one non-citizen parent are twice as likely to be uninsured (8%) as peers with two citizen parents (4%).”

The Assessment offered a litany of strategies to address these and other complex health needs experienced by our immigrant and refugee communities, including: “Improve coordination and partnerships among community stakeholders to comprehensively address the health needs of LEP populations.” The City-County Immigrant & Refugee Affairs work will include such coordination efforts, as well as close the various legal, social and economic barriers and disparities that make it difficult for immigrants, refugees and their families to access care and health-related resources. This will include providing pertinent information to immigrants and refugees about their rights and relevant changes in

immigration/refugee legislature (e.g. Public Charge Rule), and ensure that such information is conveyed in languages spoken by the impacted communities.

In addition to connecting residents to resources, the City-County Immigrant & Refugee Affairs program will help create and foster opportunities to honor and celebrate the various cultures of our immigrants and refugees. Whether supporting Durham Refugee Day, or hosting other events, the process of successful integration may necessitate evolving beyond assimilating immigrants to the “American” culture, but embracing the diversity of other cultures. This may prove to be vital to the City’s equity objective and the goal to make Durham a model city where all residents, regardless of their national origin, enjoy its services, programs and economic prosperity.

**Alternatives**

The City may opt not to execute an Interlocal Agreement and assume the totality of the expense to support the staff and operations of the Immigrant & Refugee Affairs’ program and initiatives.

**Financial Impact**

The financial impact for the full term of the Interlocal Agreement is contingent on the City’s and County’s respective approved annual budgets to sustain the Immigrant/Refugee Affairs program and initiatives. For FY22, the City and County have committed \$65,500 each for a total of \$131,000 to cover personal services and operating expenses.

**Equal Business Opportunity Summary**

This is an Interlocal Agreement that was not reviewed by the Department of Equity and Inclusion for compliance with the Ordinance to Promote Equal Business Opportunities in City Contracting as funding is coming directly from City and County general funds.

**Contractor Workforce Diversity & Hiring Practices**

Due to the nature of this agenda item, obtaining Contractor Workforce Diversity & Hiring Practices information is not applicable.

**Attachments**

Durham City-County Immigrant/Refugee Affairs Interlocal Agreement