

Recommendations

- **Increase the funding for immigration legal services to \$15.3 million**, from its current \$10 million, to enable legal representatives within the Liberty Defense Project to continue work on existing cases and to allow new providers to serve 1,000 New Yorkers needing legal assistance to protect themselves against federal anti-immigrant enforcement. The funds should be distributed to organizations providing legal representation as well as community based organizations handling outreach, know your rights presentations, and community education.
- **Increase the budget of the Office for New Americans to \$9.1** from its current \$6.4 million, to restore full funding to the ONA Opportunity Centers and to bring the number of centers back to its original 27. This would allow ONA to prepare an additional 400 citizenship applications, host an additional 48 intake days, and restore English classes for approximately 3,000 New Yorkers a year.
- **Enact a right to counsel for all immigrants facing deportation in New York.** Such a bill will guarantee that no one must defend themselves against a trained government lawyer alone in order to protect themselves and their families from deportation. It will also provide stable funding streams for immigration legal services, easing uncertainty on both the legal representatives and their clients.

Community Need and Opportunity

- Unlike in criminal proceedings, where defendants will be given a lawyer if they cannot afford one, immigrants do not have a right to a government-paid attorney. Those who cannot afford to hire a private attorney must find a non-profit able to help or represent themselves. But existing resources for affordable legal services are scarce, particularly outside of New York City where two-thirds of all providers are located.
- Having a lawyer represent someone in deportation proceedings makes a huge difference. 78% of immigrants with lawyers win their cases, versus 15% who don't have legal help. For immigrants who are detained, only 3% win their cases without a lawyer. Under the Trump Administration, both the number of immigration arrests and new deportation cases have risen sharply, especially in New York. This has created a crisis in our communities, who need access to legal help to be able to defend themselves against these tactics.
- **Investing in legal resources helps stabilize immigrants' lives**, which in turns means they are less likely to be victims of crime, including fraud, and more likely to find jobs and continue giving back to New York in the form of innovation, entrepreneurship, taxes, culture, and much more. Legal services must include community based organizations who are best positioned to conduct vital outreach, know your rights and community education, and often are the first on the ground in the wake of a crisis such as an ICE raid.
- **Investing in legitimate legal resources will help eligible legal immigrants protect their rights during heightened, and often unchecked, immigration enforcement.** Many of these immigrants will go on to obtain citizenship. In addition, it will protect all immigrants who are vulnerable to fraudulent schemes, as non-authorized providers often seek to fill that gap in the market.
- The initial investment in the LPD has had life-changing impacts, particularly in underserved regions, but with **most immigration cases taking several years to resolve, additional funding is required** simply to continue serving those who participated the first year and to give organizations confidence that they can hire without fear of losing funding streams. **A \$20 million investment is needed so that more individuals can be enrolled in the LDP program in 2020**, and to protect a maximum number of New Yorkers.
- By becoming the first state to enact a right to counsel for immigrants and, in the meantime, by renewing and adding to its initial investment, **New York can once again show itself to be a leader in common sense policies that uplift everyone in the state** and that confront the hatred and discrimination currently embraced by the federal government.