

Supporting Organizations: ACLU of California, Active SGV, AAPIs for Civic Empowerment, Advancement Project California, Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus, Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles, Asian Law Alliance, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Bend the Arc - Southern California, Better World Group, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Breakthrough San Juan Capistrano, CA LULAC, California Immigrant Policy Center, California League of Conservation Voters, CAMEO, California ReLeaf, Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Center for Environmental Health, Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), ClimatePlan, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), Community Water Center, COFEM-Council of Mexican Federations, Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU, Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR-CA), Courage California, Ecoconsult, Equality California, Friends Committee on Legislation of California, Ground Game LA, HOPE for All: Helping Others Prosper Economically, Human Impact Partners, Immigrant Defenders Law Center, Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice, Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective, InnerCity Struggle, Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service, Los Angeles, International Rescue Committee-Los Angeles, Khmer Girls in Action, KIWA (Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance), Korean Resource Center, LAANE, LA Voice, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, League of Women Voters of California, Los Angeles LGBT Center, Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice, Matthew 25/Mateo 25, Mexican American Bar Association, Mi Familia Vota, Mission Asset Fund, People Organized for Westside Renewal, Planning and Conservation League, Program for Torture Victims, Promesa Boyle Heights, Safe Routes to School National Partnership, SEIU California, SEIU Local 2015, SEIU United Service Workers West, Sierra Club California, Silver State Equality-Nevada, South Asian Network UNITE-LA, United Teachers Los Angeles, We Are All America, Western Center on Law & Poverty, WorkSafe

Government Response To the Coronavirus Must Include Immigrants & Refugees

On March 11, the World Health Organization declared the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), a pandemic. This worldwide crisis has exposed the weakness in our current infrastructure and challenges immigrants have when accessing key services. The response for all levels of government must be swift, compassionate, equitable and account for the unique challenges of immigrants and refugees.

The current coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is not just a public health emergency, it's an economic crisis, and both will disproportionately impact the most vulnerable among us. As COVID-19 continues to take its toll, we must protect our local communities as they confront and attempt to mitigate its impacts, especially healthcare workers and vulnerable populations. The response must center and support marginalized communities who are already feeling the devastating economic impact of this pandemic, especially workers who are earning low wages and are one paycheck away from crisis, including individuals with disabilities and other special needs.

Immigrants face particular challenges during this time because of lack of access to public services due to immigration restriction. Furthermore, language access is another barrier. There are over 200 languages spoken in our state, with little to no interpretation available for indigenous speaking communities like the Hmong, Zapotecs and Mixtecs. Mixed legal status is common in Immigrant households, which can hinder them from seeking assistance for fear of losing status or putting a family member at risk. Those that work may not be eligible for programs like disability or paid family leave. Trump's sustained attacks on immigrants, people of color and Muslim communities have exacerbated these fears and challenges.

The state of California has protected immigrants and has created a more welcoming environment for immigrants in recent years, thanks to grassroots organizing and power building across the state. However, COVID-19 has exposed large gaps in our country's health, economic and labor sectors. It is imperative that Los Angeles and California continue to lead the way to ensure equal justice for immigrants, particularly at a time of crisis.

The signatories to this letter, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA) align with a cross section of grassroots, professional, and community service organizations from across California are led by, and rooted in, our communities. We know all too well how these communities can be left out of preparation and recovery efforts. Therefore, we are requesting the following steps to ensure our communities are not left behind.

If you have any questions, contact Joseph Villela at jvillela@chirla.org.

Federal Government Response

Ensure testing and treatment is culturally sensitive, free, and does not discriminate based on income, gender, nationality, disability, and citizenship.

Ensure services and emergency announcements are multilingual and culturally appropriate.

Any public and safety net assistance must also include immigrants independent of status.

Direct the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to suspend immigration enforcement operations, including interior checkpoints near sensitive locations including hospitals, clinics and other healthcare facilities.

Public Charge rule must be immediately halted.

USCIS must extend indefinitely any deadlines associated with immigration applications, including but not limited to DACA.

Close all immigration courts, particularly the "tent courts" on the southern border.

End all targeted harassment of sanctuary jurisdictions.

Release all migrants from detention centers. Given the alarming rates of deaths while in custody as well as the lack of containment of a mumps epidemic in 2019, it is clear neither private nor federal facilities can handle a health crisis.

U.S Secretary of Commerce must extend the response period of the U.S. Census.
Eliminate scapegoating and messages that promote xenophobia or blaming of ethnic and immigrant communities.

Outline a plan to work closely with the Governors of all States, especially those taking proactive measures to reach all communities regardless of immigration status.

Convene a bipartisan Task Force composed of elected officials at the state and local levels, distilling best practices to reach all communities irrespective of immigration status.

Golden State Response

Ensure testing and treatment is culturally sensitive, free, and does not discriminate based on income, gender, nationality, disability, and citizenship.

Ensure services and emergency announcements are multilingual and culturally appropriate.

Create free mobile testing units to reach hard to reach communities.

Expand access to state funded programs for immigrants:

California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) must increase its current allocations to individuals and open it to parents, or caretakers, who are undocumented for at least 6 months;

Cash Assistance for Immigrant Program (CAPI) must provide assistance to undocumented elderly for at least 6 months.

Immediately include immigrant tax filers who file with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) in the CalEITC and Young Child Tax Credit, retroactively for tax year 2019 and ongoing.

Ensure access to full scope Medi-Cal for elderly undocumented immigrants is expedited and implemented now to ensure elderly seniors have access to all services.

Provide resources for trusted messengers to reach out to immigrant communities to provide key information.

Provide and extend unemployment benefits for immigrants who are currently not eligible.

Ensure non-traditional workers such as domestic workers are afforded with labor protections.

Enhance worker protections to all workers to ensure that vulnerable workers are not penalized for their care or of their families.

Provide emergency funding to local and regional governments, school districts, and non-profit organizations.

Work with local and regional governments to ensure that communities across California receive the help they need.

Local Response: Los Angeles County, Municipalities and School Districts

Conduct targeted outreach by the Office of Immigrant Affairs to provide updated information to the immigrant community.

Allocate funds and work directly with Community Based Organizations (CBO's) to provide appropriate information and services to vulnerable communities.

Halt all evictions for at least 6 months.

Close all schools, while ensuring that families who depend on their local school district for essential services have continued access, and utilize those spaces to provide wrap around services.

Ensure truancy penalties are halted for at least 6 months.

Halt all transfers from city and county local law enforcement agencies to immigration authorities.

Supply dumpsters, showers, hand washing stations, vermin abatement, soap, and water to every informal settlement in Los Angeles.

Diversification of resources to ensure all individuals, regardless of immigration status, have access to aid.

Directive and guidance to all businesses within the county and city who employ workers at the frontline of this crisis such as healthcare, home care workers, first responders, janitors, airports, port workers, etc., to provide personal protective equipment.

Work with local governments, school districts to ensure a coordinated effort to fulfill the needs.

Development a transportation plan, including subsidies/fee waivers, for those who otherwise use public transit, particularly for testing and basic amenities.



