

**From:** [Hao Nguyen](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Committee Assistants \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** To Budget and Fiscal Management Committee  
**Date:** Thursday, June 3, 2021 6:43:47 PM

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Dear Council Member Balducci and the Budget and Fiscal Management Committee,  
First of all, thank you so much for crafting the amendment to financially support immigrants applying for immigration reliefs. Our community is in great need of this financial support. From looking at the Immigration Status Fees Scholarship, I didn't see T-visa I-914 (for human trafficking victims) and U-visa I-918 (for crime victims) included on this list. Although there is no filing fee for these 2 visas, the appealing fee is \$675, and this is a huge financial burden for many survivors. Therefore, I really hope that you can include the appealing fees for these two visas as well.

PS: We serve many foreign national victims of human trafficking in our program, and I am happy to provide more information if you need. You can email me or call my phone number at 206-351-2604.

Again, thank you very much for working on this important matter. And thank you so much for your consideration.

**Hao Nguyen, MSW** (she/her)  
*Anti-Human Trafficking Program Manager*  
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**From:** [Michael Ramos](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Committee Assistants \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** public comment for budget committee from Church Council of Greater Seattle  
**Date:** Monday, June 14, 2021 8:40:08 PM  
**Attachments:** [Testimony related Immigrant Fee support - CCGS to King County Council.pdf](#)

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Dear King County Budget and Fiscal Management Committee:

Please receive the attached public comment related to your hearing on June 15, 2021.

Thank you.

Michael Ramos  
Executive Director  
Church Council of Greater Seattle

Grounded in faith.  
Working for justice.



June 14, 2021

Budget and Fiscal Management Committee  
King County Council  
516 Third Avenue, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Chair Kohl-Welles and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of faith communities throughout King County that have accompanied immigrants in our county over the last two decades, I ask for your support for the supplement budget striker amendment (2021-0179) that will provide \$5 million for immigrants applying for immigration relief. Removing barriers so that immigrants can access basic services for which they qualify and need for their survival and thriving is necessary, timely, and wise. Such access will also lead to healthier communities, strengthen families, and reduce fear.

The pandemic has created economic, educational, and/or health challenges for many, if not most, households in the county. As part of the task force that led to the King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission, access to services and economic opportunity were critical priorities expressed by many of the groups with whom we met. Such access and opportunity, when combined with adjustment of status, rights, and citizenship provide for full participation and contribution in society. When they benefit, the county benefits.

I look forward to your attentive support for this measure. You may reach me via email at [mramos@thechurchcouncil.org](mailto:mramos@thechurchcouncil.org) or by phone at (206) 525-1213 x102.

Sincerely,

Michael Ramos  
Executive Director  
Church Council of Greater Seattle

**From:** [Bonnie Stern Wasser](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Committee Assistants \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Budget & Fiscal Committee meeting comment 6/15/2021  
**Date:** Monday, June 14, 2021 10:00:28 PM  
**Attachments:** [OneAmerica in Support of Immigration Filing Fee Fund.pdf](#)

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Hello: Attached please find a letter from OneAmerica in support of the **Amendment to the Omnibus Supplemental Budget that will Allocate \$5M to for Immigrant Relief Application Assistance Fund** regarding the 6/15/21 meeting of the KC Budget and Fiscal Committee meeting. I will attend by Zoom and hope there is time for me to make a statement. This concerns ER20 and the related appendix of immigration filing fees and other services to be funded. (It is also referred to as ER26 in the striking amendment within the document package for the meeting).

Thank you so much for reaching out to our organization and hope the Committee will vote in favor.  
Best regards,

**[Bonnie Stern Wasser, Staff Attorney \(She/Her\)](#)**

OneAmerica/Washington New Americans

1225 S. Weller St. #430

Seattle, WA 98104

[www.weareoneamerica.org](http://www.weareoneamerica.org)

[www.wanewamericans.org](http://www.wanewamericans.org)

Due to COVID, we are still working remotely.

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1225 S. Weller St. Suite 430, Seattle, WA 98144 (206)452-8408

OneAmerica [www.weareoneamerica.org](http://www.weareoneamerica.org)

June 15, 2021

Budget and Fiscal Management Committee

King County Council Members:

Jeanne Kohl-Welles, Chair;

Rod Dembowski, Vice Chair;

Claudia Balducci

Kathy Lambert,

Joe McDermott,

Dave Upthegrove,

Girmay Zahilay

**RE: Support for an Amendment to the Omnibus Supplemental Budget that will Allocate \$5M to for Immigrant Relief Application Assistance Fund**

Dear Councilmembers Kohl-Welles and Dembowski, and Committee Members:

OneAmerica, a 501(c)(3) Seattle based organization, hereby supports an amendment to the upcoming Council omnibus supplemental budget that will allocate \$5M to provide financial assistance for immigrants applying for immigration relief. OneAmerica is a statewide immigrants rights and power building organization founded by Rep. Pramila Jayapal shortly after 9/11 originally as Hate Free Zone. Since 2008, OneAmerica's Washington New Americans (WNA) program has been providing free legal services to lawful permanent residents (LPRs) seeking to naturalize and become U.S. citizens. WNA partners with the State of Washington and receives state funding to support our naturalization clinics in partnership with the American Immigration Lawyers Association, Washington Chapter (AILAWA) and 13 Washington nonprofit organizations who also provide naturalization services and with whom we share our State grant. For FY22 we expect the number of grantees to increase to 15. Before COVID, we provided 11 clinics a year in person around Washington State. Since COVID, we have provided 8 virtual clinics since September 2020. With the assistance of volunteer attorneys, Department of Justice Accredited Representatives, interpreters and general volunteers, we screen applicants for eligibility, review their draft N400 applications with them, and conduct quality review of the application completed by expert immigration attorneys. After a workshop is completed, the client submits their applications and represent themselves through the process with USCIS. Most of our naturalization clients earn

below 300% of the federal poverty guidelines. So far for fiscal year FY21, about 38% of our clients qualify for USCIS fee waivers and reduced fees. (Note, the N-400 and \$725 filing fee is not on the appendix list of services proposed by this amendment, but we understand it is included generally in this program proposal.)

Last year, USCIS issued a new fee schedule that would have increased naturalization filing fees from \$725 to \$1125.00. This is unaffordable for many of our clients who live in a high cost of living city and county like Seattle/King County. Along with several organizations, we sued USCIS and the court issued a preliminary injunction against the rule. While the case has been continued, the Biden Administration still has not revoked the rule, and we understand they are working on a new rule to be issued later this year that will increase many filing fees. Similarly, in 2019, USCIS issued a rule to eliminate the receipt of public benefits as a ground to receive a fee waiver. With the City of Seattle and other groups, we sued USCIS and won an injunction there as well. We understand the Biden administration is interested in preserving fee waivers, but they still have not withdrawn this rule either.

Meanwhile, in following up with our naturalization clients, we learned that several of them for whom we had prepared their applications, and who did not qualify for fee waivers or reduced fees, ended up not sending in their applications due to the high cost of the \$725 filing fee. Since FY 2018, 125 applicants that attended our citizenship workshops did not mail their applications to USCIS (about 17% of our completed N-400s). Some of our clients or their family members lost their jobs or had other economic hardships preventing them from sending in their citizenship applications. Of those applicants who did not mail their application after successfully completing it at our workshop, about 25% did not mail it because they could not afford the fee and were facing economic hardships. We expect these numbers to grow due to the COVID-19 pandemic when we complete our FY2021 applicant outcome reports at the end of July 2021. This is why the proposed \$5 million fee fund would be so helpful.

Many families in our county are essential workers struggling to make ends meet even if they earn above the federal poverty guidelines that make them ineligible for fee waivers or reduced fees. This means that economic circumstances stand in the way of becoming US citizens even if they are otherwise eligible. In our organization, we view naturalization and citizenship as the onramp to a life of civic engagement, including the right to vote, to serve on a jury of one's peers, to obtain better jobs, obtain better housing, qualify for security clearances for government jobs, and become more involved in their communities. Naturalization is a key engine of immigrant integration in WA State, and it generates benefits for society as a whole. On average, studies have shown, naturalization raises an individual's income by \$3,296. Our naturalization program's impact alone, just for FY2019 and FY 2020, translates to 4.4 million dollars in new earnings for the new citizens who received our services. If all eligible permanent residents in Washington alone naturalized, they could generate \$867.3 million in additional earnings for the economy.

On a related note, our WNA program depends upon immigrants becoming lawful permanent residents. The fee increase rule that we were able to block would have made becoming a lawful permanent resident out of reach for many immigrants in a variety of statuses. Even today, many people cannot afford the filing fees for the green card (\$1225.00 a person), work permits of various types and other statuses. Therefore, this fund will benefit many immigrants facing economic bars to regularizing, extending, or changing status.

OneAmerica thanks the County Council for developing an amendment to the Council's omnibus supplemental budget that will allocate \$5M to provide financial assistance for immigrants applying for immigration relief. Thank you and your staff for including me in the early discussions about the proposal. We appreciate you taking a leadership role on this important issue and hope you will all vote to support the amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bonnie Stern Wasser". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Bonnie Stern Wasser  
Staff Attorney  
OneAmerica/Washington New Americans  
[bonnie@weareoneamerica.org](mailto:bonnie@weareoneamerica.org)  
(206)778-2570 Direct