



Legislation Text

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AN ORDINANCE relating to a task force to make recommendations on the creation of a King County immigrant and refugee commission.

PREAMBLE:

With a population of two million residents, King County grows more diverse every year. Since 2000, the county has grown by more than two hundred twenty thousand residents, with most of the increase attributable to people of color. Only half of that growth is from births. Most of the rest is from immigrants and refugees - from all parts of Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa.

Foreign-born residents, including immigrants and refugees, face particular challenges upon arrival in the United States. One quarter of King County residents speak a language other than English at home, and close to half of them report that no one in their households speak English well or at all. In total, King County residents speak over one hundred twenty different languages, or over one hundred seventy languages including dialects spoken.

Whether it is public health, public safety, public defense, elections or other county governmental services, accessing county services presents a special challenge to those unfamiliar with this country and with our government settings in particular. Many agencies work to address equity and social justice in delivering services, whether it is providing interpreter services for health screening for a refugee at a public health clinic or public defense legal services for an immigrant youth in dependency proceedings, obtaining a court order that allows the youth to successfully

apply for special immigrant juvenile visa status and thereby obtaining the stability to remain in this country and move forward with the youth's life. It is vital that the county keep determinants of equity and barriers to opportunity in the forefront of decision-making that will impact residents of our county and help them to become thriving involved members of the community. King County is also committed to being a leader in building regional partnerships and promoting a coordinated, regional approach to address the needs of this county's immigrant and refugee residents, consistent with the county's vision for a strategic plan for equity and social justice. Community partners such as individuals, faith- and community-based organizations, local government agencies and the private sector have various touchpoints with immigrants and refugees. Working collectively, these groups can use each other's expertise to identify how to build a community that strengthens and empowers immigrants and refugees to become fully contributing, participating members of King County.

Understanding the needs, demographics, and geographic distribution of the immigrant and refugee populations is important to the effective provision of services to these populations. The thoughtful creation of a commission serving immigrants and refugees with a representative membership that will encourage all voices to be heard regardless of the language spoken, can be an important means to achieving fair and equitable access to county services and opportunities for all.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

SECTION 1. A.1. The King County executive is directed to convene a task force to develop a final report with recommendations on the creation of an immigrant and refugee commission.

2. The report shall include recommendations on the commission's membership, mission and scope of duties.

3. The report may consider recommendations on the commission's alignment with other regional and

local efforts, and relationship with the county's office of equity and social justice. This may include consideration of regional and local resources available to immigrants and refugees, including, but not limited to, services by community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, local governments and other government entities such as consulates.

4. The report may consider an evaluation of how the county's current provision of services addresses immigrant and refugee resident needs and helps to move low-income immigrant and refugee populations towards economic success, what gaps currently exist in the provision of county services for immigrants and refugees that create barriers to success, and a commission's potential role in addressing gaps.

5. The task force should consult with county agencies to learn how different agencies address equity and social justice in the delivery of their services to immigrants and refugees.

6. The report may consider how needs of immigrant and refugee populations differ in high density urban area, lower density suburban areas, and lowest density rural unincorporated areas and develop recommendations for how a commission can address those differences within the commission's mission and scope of duties.

7. The report should also consider the contents of the 2014 Budget Proviso Report: Limited English Proficiency Proviso Response Report (2014-RPT0092) submitted by the office of performance, strategy and budget and make recommendations on the role of the commission in implementing the recommendations of the proviso report.

B. The task force shall conduct outreach activities to obtain community input and shall use that input to inform the report. Outreach activities shall include, but not be limited to, holding open public forums and actively soliciting written, electronic or oral community comments.

SECTION 2. A. The task force shall consist of at least eight and no more than twelve members.

B. The task force shall include representation from at least two organizations representing immigrant issues and two organizations representing refugee issues. Of these, at least one of the immigrant organizations

and one of the refugee organizations shall be small, local, community-based organizations.

C. At least one member of the task force shall live in, or represent an organization situated within, unincorporated King County.

D. At least one member of the task force shall represent a faith-based organization.

E. At least one member of the task force shall represent the minority business sector, such as a minority chamber of commerce or minority bar association representative.

F. At least one member of the task force shall be knowledgeable about King County government operations in general and may possess expertise about service delivery of one or more agencies to immigrants and refugees. This member should be able to serve as a resource to other task force members to identify opportunities and challenges within local government in the delivery of county services for immigrant and refugee populations and help bring together the governmental knowledge of staff with the community understanding of the task force.

G. Task force members shall be leaders within the immigrant and refugee communities. Members must possess expertise in immigrant or refugee issues and the ability to engage relevant communities in identifying desirable characteristics of the commission's membership, mission and scope of duties.

H. The task force shall be appointed by the executive no later than September 1, 2015. At least thirty days before the appointment, the executive shall notify all councilmembers by letter of the persons the executive intends to appoint. The executive shall also, by electronic mail or letter, notify all councilmembers of the final persons who will be appointed by at least seven days before the appointment. Upon appointment of the task force, the executive shall notify all councilmembers by letter of the appointments and file a paper and electronic copy with the clerk of the council. The task force shall hold its first meeting no later than October 1, 2015.

I. The executive shall reimburse task force members for mileage at the standard county reimbursement rate for travel to and from scheduled task force meetings and for parking at meetings outside of county

facilities. Task force members attending meetings at county facilities shall have parking in the county garage paid by the executive while members attend meetings or conduct business related to the task force.

J. The executive and council shall jointly provide staffing and resources to effectively support the work of the task force and its outreach activities.

SECTION 3. A. By February 1, 2016, the task force shall provide a progress report to the council. The progress report shall be filed in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers and the lead staff of the committee of the whole, or its successor.

B. By May 31, 2016, the task force shall file its final report in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers and the executive.