



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

CONSUMER & BUSINESS AFFAIRS

August 13, 2025

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TO: Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair
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FROM: Rafael Carbajal
Director

REPORT ON SUSTAINING AND EXPANDING REPRESENTLA (ITEM NO. 18, AGENDA OF JULY 1, 2025)

On July 1, 2025, your Board directed the Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) in the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) to report back on sustaining and expanding the RepresentLA program, including the following:¹

1. An overview of the funding allocations and sources for the RepresentLA program;
2. A description and breakdown of the programs, organizations, clients served, and types of supportive services that are funded by RepresentLA;
3. An analysis and recommendations of ways RepresentLA could adjust and adapt to meet the pressing and urgent needs of Los Angeles County's (County) immigrant community given the violence and intensity of recent federal raids and the bypassing of traditional legal processes;
4. An assessment of funding needs to both sustain the RepresentLA program in the future and potentially expand it to meet the County's current immigration enforcement crisis; and
5. A plan to re-engage with philanthropy to explore the use of philanthropic donations and/or grants to fund RepresentLA, in partnership with the Chief Executive Office's Center for Strategic Partnership (CSP).

¹ <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/204731.pdf>



RepresentLA has become an essential lifeline for immigrant residents of the Los Angeles County (County), ensuring that thousands of individuals facing deportation and navigating complex immigration matters do not face these challenges alone. Since its launch in April 2022, the program has served more than 21,000 people, providing free legal representation, legal orientation, and connections to essential resources for some of the most vulnerable, including asylum seekers, survivors of trafficking, unaccompanied minors, Veterans, and immigrants experiencing homelessness.

By leveraging a robust network of trusted nonprofit legal service providers and case management support, RepresentLA helps families remain together and addresses inequities that disproportionately impact immigrant communities.

The urgency of this work has only grown exponentially over the past few weeks amid escalating federal immigration enforcement actions that are destabilizing our most vulnerable communities. Despite limited resources and surging demand, RepresentLA continues to embody the County's commitment to equity, justice, and due process by delivering high-quality, life-transforming services to those who need them most.

I. RepresentLA Funding Allocations and Sources

RepresentLA is funded through a public-private partnership between the County, the City of Los Angeles (City), the California Community Foundation (CCF), and the Weingart Foundation (Weingart), which collectively have invested \$23.8 million into the program since it launched in April 2022. Funding allocations since program inception are as follows:

Funding Partner:	Amount:	Source:	Date Approved:
County	\$3.5M	ARP Tranche 1	July 27, 2021
	Up to \$1M	Dept of Health Services, CBEST*	October 5, 2022
	\$3.5M	ARP Tranche 2	September 13, 2022
	Up to \$1M	Dept of Health Services, CBEST*	June 21, 2023
	\$1.3M	FY2024-25 Supplemental Budget	October 8, 2024
	\$5.5M	FY2025-26 Budget	June 23, 2025
City	\$2M	City General Fund	2021-22 budget
	\$2M	City General Fund	2023-24 budget
	\$1M	City General Fund	2024-25 budget
	\$1M	City General Fund	June 6, 2025
CCF	\$1M	California Community Foundation	November 2021
Weingart	\$1M	Weingart Foundation	September 2021
Total	\$21.8M (\$23.8M including DHS-CBEST*)		

**Funding exclusively for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness referred by DHS' CBEST program.*

II. RepresentLA Components, Organizations, Clients Served and Support Services

RepresentLA was designed to provide comprehensive support across a broad spectrum of immigration needs. Through a network of trusted nonprofit legal service providers, the program delivers free legal representation and assistance to individuals navigating complex immigration systems. The following outlines the core program components, key partner organizations, populations served, and the legal services provided to date:

1. Removal Defense for Detained and Non-Detained Individuals.

- *Eight Service Providers:* Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA) (*lead contractor and service provider*), Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), Council on American-Islamic Relations-CA (CAIR-LA), Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef), Los Angeles LGBT Center, Public Counsel, TransLatin@ Coalition, University of Southern California Gould School of Law Immigration Clinic.
- *Clients Served:* A total of **662** individuals in removal proceedings have received *full-scope* immigration legal representation through May 2025. This includes **110** individuals who were detained when their legal representation commenced.

2. Vulnerable Populations seeking immigration relief. The program prioritizes groups who have struggled to access legal representation through other programs, most of whom are not in removal proceedings:

- *Labor Trafficking and Workplace Exploitation*
 - i. *Service providers:* Asian Americans Advancing Justice; Thai Community Development Center; National Day Labor Organizing Network (NDLON); Al Otro Lado²
 - ii. *Clients Served:* 356
- *Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)*
 - i. *Service providers:* CARECEN (lead contractor for vulnerable populations representation); Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project.
 - ii. *Clients Served:* 338
- *Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families*
 - i. *Service provider:* Immigrant Defenders Law Center
 - ii. *Clients Served:* 23

² Al Otro Lado provided legal services in the areas of Labor Trafficking & Workplace Exploitation and Asylum until December 31, 2024. NDLON provided legal services in the area of Labor Trafficking & Workplace Exploitation until June 30, 2025.

- *Asylum Seekers*
 - i. *Service providers:* PARS Equality Center; Al Otro Lado
 - ii. *Clients Served:* 374
- Immigrants Experiencing Homelessness³
 - i. *Service providers:* CARECEN, CHIRLA
 - ii. *Clients Served:* 236
- **Total Vulnerable Population Clients Served: 1,327**

3. Legal Orientation and Limited-Scope Legal Assistance: RepresentLA (and the LA Justice Fund pilot predecessor) initially focused on providing full-scope attorney representation. However, in response to emerging needs – including a significant increase of unrepresented persons in removal proceedings and Texas-sponsored busing of migrants to Los Angeles in 2023 – RepresentLA began funding legal orientation and limited-scope legal services. Four organizations now provide these services on an ongoing basis: CARECEN, CHIRLA, Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project, and Immigrant Defenders.

Additionally, all legal service providers now have the flexibility to request adjustments to their full-scope representation caseloads to devote staff time to limited-scope legal assistance, which includes a range of vital services: Credible fear interview and bond hearing representation, preparation of motions to change venue and/or address in immigration court, applications for asylum, and employment authorization. DCBA-OIA assesses the program on an ongoing basis to ensure its responsiveness to emerging community needs and made these adjustments to allow the program to meet a larger share of the unprecedented demand for legal counsel and services for individuals facing deportation proceedings without an attorney. Services help these recipients avoid missing filing deadlines and seek immigration relief, including:

Legal Orientation & Limited-Scope Services	19,241
Immigration Legal Orientation/Know Your Rights	8,790
Worker Rights & Safety	6,053
Limited Scope Legal Services	4,398
Total Served Across All Program Areas	21,230

³ A DCBA-Department of Health Services Memorandum of Understanding to provide immigration legal services to individuals seeking services from the Countywide Benefits Entitlement Services Team (CBEST), which provided funding for immigrants experiencing homelessness within RepresentLA, expired on June 30, 2025. The [Mobile Immigration Services Project](#), a separate DCBA-OIA initiative, will continue to support the immigrants experiencing homelessness population throughout 2025 with critical immigration legal and case management services.

- 4. Support Services** Linking RepresentLA clients to support services has been a program goal. However, providing effective case management to connect clients to available support services is a resource-intensive endeavor, and utilizing program funds for case management would significantly reduce funding available for legal services. Thus, only a small share of program funds was initially dedicated to case management.

In response to the voiced need by RepresentLA and other service providers across the immigration sector for case management to achieve successful legal outcomes for clients, OIA secured separate funding to create a “Capacity Building for Immigrant-Focused CBOs” initiative that focused on helping legal providers build case management capacity. In May 2024, OIA awarded grants of \$150,000 each to 21 organizations to hire case management staff for one year. This included most RepresentLA service providers, who participated in a yearlong cohort where they received training on integrating case management into legal service programs, immigrant eligibility for public benefits, and best practices for case managers. Alma Family Services, an organization with decades of case management expertise, provided training and ongoing technical assistance to case managers. Through this initiative, RepresentLA clients received access to case management support from May 2024 – May 2025.

- 5. Analysis and recommendations for RepresentLA to meet the urgent needs of LA County’s immigrant community, given the violence and intensity of the recent federal raids and the bypassing of traditional legal processes.**

In the wake of sweeping immigration policy changes designed to limit due process and expedite deportations, immigrants at risk of removal are finding it increasingly difficult to secure legal representation because the need for services far outpaces available capacity.⁴ As noted, RepresentLA has already made significant program adjustments to reach a higher volume of clients with legal orientation and vital, limited-scope legal assistance. Legal service providers now have the flexibility to represent individuals at certain critical phases of their proceedings, including bond hearings and “credible fear interviews,” without committing to full-scope representation thereafter. Securing the release of individuals eligible for bond allows them to return to their livelihoods and households, providing additional time to hire an attorney to represent them in immigration court.

⁴ See, e.g. Walker, J. (2025, July 25). *More immigrants will fight deportations alone as Trump ramps up enforcement*. Axios. <https://www.axios.com/2025/07/25/trump-deportation-immigrants-attorney-shortage>; Los Angeles Times. (2025, July 23). *Trump administration cuts legal aid for immigrants, ramps up deportation push*. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-07-23/legal-aid-cut>.

Many immigrants detained in recent months must pass a credible fear interview with an asylum officer just to avoid “expedited removal” and present their asylum or fear-based immigration relief claim before an immigration judge. Program adjustments allow service provider organizations to assist a higher volume of these individuals directly impacted by the recent, aggressive local enforcement actions by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Existing Challenges: Legal service providers were already stretched far beyond capacity prior to the aggressive local enforcement actions beginning on June 6th. Although litigation has temporarily blocked the federal government from engaging in warrantless stops of immigrants in public by utilizing racial profiling and other unlawful tactics, the “One Big Beautiful Bill,” signed into law on July 4, 2025, significantly increases immigration enforcement funding and expands detention capacity. These new resources, along with access to personally identifiable information on Medi-Cal recipients and taxpayers, will result in more arrests and a need for legal representation that exceeds current capacity.

Upcoming New Challenges: A recent memorandum from the acting ICE Director aims to drastically limit bond eligibility by making all persons who entered the U.S. without inspection ineligible for a bond hearing.⁵ Due to this far-reaching reinterpretation of immigration law, attorneys must now engage in complex federal court litigation just to secure their clients’ release from custody. This has potential to limit RepresentLA’s capacity to support large number of clients through bond hearing-only representation.

Legislation passed in January greatly expands the categories of immigrants subject to mandatory detention due to an arrest or criminal charge, even without a conviction.⁶ These policy changes, ongoing local enforcement efforts, and an anticipated three-fold increase in capacity for civil immigration detention, will all contribute to a substantial increase in the need for representation of detained County residents for the foreseeable future.

State funding through the California Department of Social Services includes funds for Regional Network Hubs (RNH) to coordinate rapid response efforts, as well as some additional funding for detained removal defense. However, these state funds are limited and are only available to a handful of organizations that meet specific

⁵ American Immigration Lawyers Association. (2025, July 24). *Policy brief: ICE plan to detain most undocumented noncitizens would deprive millions of liberty and undermine immigration courts’ authority* (AILA Doc. No. 25072431). <https://www.aila.org/library/policy-brief-ice-plan-to-detain-most-undocumented-noncitizens-would-deprive-millions-of-liberty-and-undermine-immigration-courts-authority>

⁶ Congress.gov. (2025, January 29). *Laken Riley Act*, Public Law No. 119–1, 139 Stat. 3. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/5>

statutory eligibility criteria. As a result, even eligible organizations report receiving no funding or inadequate funding to meet current and anticipated demand for detained removal defense. Therefore, demand for detained representation services continues to greatly exceed provider capacity.

Recommendation: Increased RepresentLA Removal Defense Capacity and Case Management. The expansion of representation for detained immigrants is RepresentLA's top priority. Only 14 percent of detained immigrants secure legal representation, and those with counsel fare better at every stage of the court process – they are four times more likely to be released from detention during proceedings, 11 times more likely to seek relief such as asylum, and more than twice as likely to obtain that relief compared to unrepresented detainees.⁷ A sustained increase in ICE enforcement will further reduce the percentage of represented detainees unless program funding is also increased.

To strengthen its capacity to defend individuals facing deportation, OIA submitted a request for \$2,875,000 in funding through the Care First Community Investment (CFCI) program. This request aimed to accomplish two main goals:

1. **Offset Lost City Funding:** \$1 million of the request was intended to replace a \$1 million reduction in City funding for the 2025–26 fiscal year.
2. **Expand Legal Services:** The remaining amount included a 25 percent increase in funding to address the growing immigration enforcement crisis. This would allow the program to expand its network of legal service providers, bring in new organizations with expertise in representing detained immigrants, and hire a managing or directing attorney to coordinate and oversee pro bono legal efforts.

Despite the urgent need and comprehensive scope of the request, OIA was recommended for an award of only **\$312,000—just 11 percent** of the total amount sought. While this funding will still support some aspects of the RepresentLA program, it falls far short of what is needed. Even with the CFCI investment, the program's overall budget for FY 2025–2026 is facing a nine percent cut compared to the previous year. This is happening at a time when the demand for legal defense and immigrant support services is rapidly increasing.

Additionally, now more than ever, it is critical to ensure that case management services are available to clients of RepresentLA and their families. These services are essential for helping individuals and households navigate the serious and often

⁷ Eagly, I. V., & Shafer, S. (2016, September 28). *Access to counsel in immigration court*. American Immigration Council. <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/report/access-counsel-immigration-court>

devastating consequences of aggressive immigration enforcement. Case managers provide support in dealing with financial instability, job loss, mental health challenges, and other trauma that families experience when a loved one is detained or at risk of deportation.

To address this urgent need, the Center for Nonprofit Management (CNM)—a partner organization and subrecipient of OIA’s Capacity Building Project—submitted a proposal for \$4.5 million in funding through the CFCI program. The goal of the proposal was to continue and expand the case management capacity initiative that was initially funded by OIA in Fiscal Year 2024–25. If fully funded, this initiative would allow participating organizations, including those in the RepresentLA network, to maintain and enhance their ability to offer direct support to immigrant families facing complex legal, emotional, and economic challenges.

Unfortunately, the funding recommendation from the CFCI program was only \$343,750—and not specifically awarded to CNM for their proposed initiative. Instead, this smaller amount is set aside for general capacity-building efforts, meaning CNM must now compete with other applicants for a share of those limited funds. Even if CNM were to receive the full amount—which is uncertain—this would cover only 8 percent of the funding, originally determined to be necessary to meet the growing demand for case management services.

Without adequate funding, the ability of legal and community-based organizations to support immigrant families will be severely limited, even as the need for these services continues to rise sharply.

6. Assessment of funding needs to sustain RepresentLA and potentially expand it to meet the current immigration enforcement crisis in LA County.

Over the last three years, RepresentLA has made significant progress toward serving unrepresented immigrants in the County. The program has been highly responsive to evolving community needs, stepping in to make vital services available to thousands of County residents at risk of deportation. Additionally, RepresentLA has made a concerted effort to reach vulnerable and underserved groups—such as individuals with mental health conditions, survivors of violence, and immigrants with complex legal cases—who have often been overlooked by other legal support programs.

With aggressive federal immigration enforcement showing no signs of slowing down, the need for consistent, sustainable, and accessible legal support for immigrant communities remains critical. Families are facing rising numbers of detentions, deportations, and legal challenges—often without adequate resources or representation. In this climate, it is essential to ensure that legal defense services not only continue but also grow to meet the escalating demand.

In response to this urgent need, OIA strongly recommends that RepresentLA be funded at a minimum level of **\$9,375,000** for Fiscal Year 2025–26. This funding level would achieve two critical objectives:

1. **Restore Lost Funding:** It would replace the \$1 million reduction in City funding that occurred between Fiscal Year 2024–25 and Fiscal Year 2025-26.
2. **Expand Services by 25 percent:** It would provide a much-needed 25 percent increase in funding to strengthen and expand the program in response to the growing immigration enforcement crisis.

With this investment, RepresentLA would be able to broaden its network of legal service providers, add new partners with experience in defending detained immigrants, and hire a managing or directing attorney to coordinate pro bono legal work and increase overall capacity. These steps are essential to ensure that immigrant families across the County have access to the high-quality legal defense and support they need during this critical time.

Without adequate funding, RepresentLA will not be able to meet the urgent and growing legal needs of immigrant communities across the County. At the current funding level of **\$6.5 million for Fiscal Year 2025–26**, the program is already stretched thin and lacks the capacity to respond to the recent surge in detentions resulting from intensified federal immigration enforcement.

RepresentLA's legal service providers are operating at full capacity. They can only take on new clients as existing cases are closed, which creates delays and limits access. As a result, providers are receiving far more requests for legal representation than the program can accommodate. While some individuals are fortunate enough to receive legal help through state-funded programs, the vast majority of people facing deportation must go unrepresented—often with devastating consequences—if they cannot afford to pay for costly private attorneys.

One of the most pressing needs is for detained removal defense for individuals held at the Adelanto Detention Facility in San Bernardino County, where many County residents are sent after being arrested by ICE. Nonprofit legal organizations have faced major challenges in hiring and retaining staff willing to take on these difficult and resource-intensive cases, especially given the long hours, travel demands, and emotional toll of working in detention settings.

To help close this gap, RepresentLA has identified a critical staffing need: **A pro bono managing or directing attorney** who would lead recruitment, training, and technical support for volunteer attorneys willing to represent detained immigrants. This position would be a critical asset in expanding the program's capacity to

provide legal representation for individuals in detention, but it can only be established if additional funding is secured.

However, without additional funding, RepresentLA will not be able to meet the growing demand for legal services. As immigration enforcement actions increase, more people—many of them long-time residents and parents of U.S. citizen children—are being detained and placed into deportation proceedings. Yet, too many face these life-altering situations without a lawyer simply because they cannot afford one. This gap in access to legal defense puts vulnerable community members at serious risk of permanent separation from their families, homes, and livelihoods. RepresentLA is one of the few programs in the County offering free legal representation to people in deportation proceedings, but its current funding is not enough to reach even those in greater need. Again, to help address this urgent situation, OIA submitted a request for **\$2,875,000** in funding through the **CFCI** program. This funding would allow RepresentLA to:

- Restore \$1 million in City funding that was lost between fiscal years;
- Expand legal services by 25 percent to meet rising demand;
- Add new legal service providers, especially those with experience representing detained immigrants;
- Hire a managing attorney to lead and coordinate pro bono (volunteer) legal efforts.

With this investment, the program could serve more people, provide stronger support for detained individuals, and ensure more families have the legal defense they need to remain together and stable. But without it, hundreds—if not thousands—of County residents could go through deportation proceedings alone, with their futures hanging in the balance.

As mentioned above, despite the urgent need, OIA has been recommended for an award of only **\$312,000—just 11 percent** of the total amount sought. While this funding will still support some aspects of the RepresentLA program, it falls short of what is needed, as the program's overall budget for Fiscal Year 2025–26 is still facing a 9 percent cut compared to the previous year. This is happening at a time when the demand for legal defense and immigrant support services is rapidly increasing.

OIA remains committed to advocating for increased funding for RepresentLA to expand access to legal support for immigrants facing deportation. If additional funding becomes available—particularly to expand legal defense for people in immigration detention—OIA recommends piloting an additional new approach: A **bar panel model** for detained removal defense.

Under this model, qualified attorneys—including both nonprofit legal service providers and private immigration attorneys—would be assigned to represent detained immigrants at pre-set compensation rates. Attorneys would need to meet specific standards and experience requirements to participate, ensuring quality and consistency in legal representation.

A bar panel model approach offers several key benefits:

- **It expands capacity** by tapping into the skills and availability of private attorneys, many of whom already specialize in complex immigration cases.
- **It maintains support for nonprofit organizations** that are already serving detained clients but are operating at or beyond their limits.
- **It creates a more flexible, scalable response** to the growing number of people in detention who urgently need legal defense.

Launching this bar panel would require additional funding, along with a planning and implementation period of approximately **six months**. During that time, OIA would work with partners to establish eligibility criteria, design a fair and sustainable payment structure, recruit participants, and ensure adequate training and oversight.

If funded, a bar panel model could significantly expand RepresentLA's reach and help ensure that more detained immigrants have access to timely, high-quality legal representation—giving them a real chance to fight their case and stay with their families.

7. A plan to re-engage with philanthropy to explore the use of philanthropic donations and/or grants to fund Represent LA, in partnership with the Chief Executive Office's Center for Strategic Partnership

In response to this directive and your other motion passed on July 15, 2025—["Promoting Economic Resilience: Supporting the Small Business Interruption Fund and Launching Cash Aid for Impacted Families"](#) (Agenda Item 43-D)—OIA is working closely with the Chief Executive Office's Center for Strategic Partnerships (CSP) to develop and implement a fundraising strategy. The goal is to launch a **flexible cash aid fund** to support workers and families who have been economically impacted by immigration enforcement, particularly those affected by ICE detentions.

This new effort is being integrated with OIA's broader work to re-engage philanthropic partners in supporting RepresentLA. By aligning these efforts, OIA aims to create a more comprehensive and coordinated response that addresses both the legal and economic needs of immigrant families.

Key priorities for the fund include:

- Ensuring that households directly affected by ICE detention receive financial assistance as a first priority;
- Embedding the cash aid initiative within the existing legal service infrastructure, so that aid reaches families whose members are in detention and are already receiving legal help through RepresentLA;
- Connecting recipients with other County safety net programs and services, such as food assistance, healthcare, and housing support, to maximize long-term stability.
- Designing it in coordination and alignment with similar efforts currently underway by the City and other organizations that are also fundraising and distributing support to impacted families. By coordinating timelines, outreach strategies, and eligibility criteria, the fund aims to avoid duplication of services, fill existing gaps in aid, reduce confusion for families seeking help, and ensure that resources are distributed as equitably and effectively as possible. This collaboration will help ensure that all available support reaches the communities that need it most without overlap or unnecessary delays.

To build momentum and encourage philanthropic investment, OIA, the CSP, City, the Department of Economic Development, and their partners will launch a series of funder briefings starting in August 2025. These briefings will highlight opportunities for sports, business, and philanthropic donors, as well as members of the public, to support both economic assistance efforts and the expansion of legal services through RepresentLA. Additional briefings will be scheduled as needed to maintain engagement and build sustained support. Through this integrated approach, OIA seeks to ensure that immigrant families not only have access to legal defense, but also the economic resources they need to remain stable and resilient in the face of aggressive immigration enforcement actions.

We thank your Board for your unwavering leadership and continued support of **RepresentLA**—a vital and nationally recognized model for providing free immigration legal services to County residents during their time of greatest need. At a moment when federal immigration enforcement is intensifying and the stakes for immigrant families are higher than ever, the Board's commitment to equity, justice, and due process has made it possible for thousands of vulnerable individuals to receive high-quality legal defense, remain with their families, and stay rooted in their communities.

As this report outlines, sustained and expanded investment in RepresentLA is essential to meeting the growing and urgent demand for legal services and ensuring that no County resident faces deportation alone simply because they cannot afford a lawyer. We look

forward to continuing to work with your offices, the County family, community partners, and philanthropic stakeholders to protect immigrant families and uphold the values of fairness and dignity that guide this work.

If you have any questions about the information in this report or would like to discuss RepresentLA in more detail, please feel free to contact me or Rigo Reyes, Executive Director of OIA, at (213) 247-1365 or rreyes@dcba.lacounty.gov.

RC:JA:RR:DS:EV:ph

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
 Chief Executive Office
 County Counsel