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A San Francisco  
**FOR ALL**

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
**IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**REPORT 2022**

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# SAN FRANCISCO

## IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION

### **A SAN FRANCISCO FOR ALL**

“We are a city that proudly draws dreamers and seekers.

People come for love. They come for opportunity. They come to escape their past. They come to build a better future.

They come to make a difference in their lives—and in the world.”

-Mayor London N. Breed, March 9, 2022

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**San Francisco residents  
is an immigrant.**

With **34.2%** of its residents born outside of the U.S., San Francisco remains one of the most **culturally and linguistically diverse** cities in the country.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2016-2020 American Community Survey

## **OUR HISTORY**

**Founded in 1997, the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission (IRC) is one of the first commissions of its kind in the nation.** Comprised of 15 voting members, the IRC advises the Mayor and Board of Supervisors on policies that impact San Francisco's immigrant residents and workers.

For over two decades, the IRC has met with community members and played a central role in helping to shape inclusive policies that make San Francisco a national leader in immigrant and language rights. Since 2009, the IRC has been staffed by its programmatic partner, the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA).



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
**IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**OCEIA** SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE OF  
**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT  
& IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS**

**SAN FRANCISCO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION**



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR HISTORY

## Language Access Rights

In 2001, the IRC advocated for and secured the Language Access Ordinance to ensure equal access to City services for all San Franciscans, regardless of what language they spoke. With amendments made in 2009 and 2015, and oversight by OCEIA, San Francisco's Language Access Ordinance remains one of the strongest in the nation.

## Comprehensive Immigration Reform

As Congress debated comprehensive immigration reform in 2009 and 2013, the IRC held a series of special hearings and policy discussions to learn how the proposed changes would impact community members. In 2013, the Commission published a report of its findings and policy recommendations. Almost all of the state and local recommendations were implemented. While comprehensive immigration reform remains a goal that only Congress can enact, the IRC continues its efforts to advance this goal with the hope of keeping families united and providing a pathway to citizenship for immigrants.

## Sanctuary City Ordinance

Since San Francisco's Sanctuary Ordinance was enacted in 1989, the IRC has fought to strengthen laws that promote public trust and cooperation. In 2013, the IRC endorsed the Due Process for All Ordinance, which was amended in 2016. Together, these ordinances help keep San Franciscans safe by making sure that all residents feel comfortable calling the police in emergencies and accessing City services.



## **Immigrant Parent Voting**

The IRC has promoted the full civic engagement of all San Francisco residents, regardless of immigration status. The IRC supported the right of noncitizen immigrant parents to vote in School Board elections. This historic right was approved by voters in 2016 and reauthorized in 2021.

## **Inclusive City Commissions**

In support of diversity, inclusion and equity, the IRC was an early supporter of efforts to make City commissions truly inclusive of the people they represent and serve. The IRC supported the Board of Supervisors' Charter Amendment to allow noncitizens to serve on City boards and commissions, which was approved by San Francisco voters in November 2020.

## **A Recovery for All**

As the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted immigrants and communities of color, the IRC held a series of special hearings to ensure that San Francisco's recovery included all of its residents, including immigrants. In 2020, the IRC held a special hearing in partnership with the Economic Recovery Task Force, and developed policy recommendations that were incorporated in the Task Force's report to the City. In 2021, the IRC held special hearings on immigrant inclusion in the COVID-19 recovery and immigrants' ability to access the services they needed in their language during the pandemic.

# THE IRC TODAY



Today, immigrants face challenges as San Francisco seeks to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, without leaving any of its residents behind. The pandemic exposed existing inequities, and immigrants and communities of color were disproportionately impacted. With an alarming increase in hate incidents against Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities, the IRC heard first-person stories of San Franciscans who were unable to access information and services they needed in their own language – from where to get COVID-19 tests and vaccines, to how to seek help for survivors of hate crimes.

Although San Francisco has one of the strongest language access ordinances in the country, the pandemic made it clear that during the emergency, not everyone was able to access the same information at the same time – and that this could have wide-ranging consequences on everything from residents' financial security to their physical health and safety.



In response to these challenges, the IRC has worked to strengthen language access rights, combat anti-AAPI hate, and ensure that the recovery includes all San Franciscans.

***The IRC holds firm in its commitment and focus to celebrate a diverse America, ensure immigrant rights, and fight for humane, inclusive policies that make the city and nation safer, healthier and more prosperous for all.***





# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST YEAR

## Celebrating Local Immigrant Leaders

Produced a virtual Immigrant Leadership Awards celebration to honor immigrant leaders and champions of immigrant rights for their leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. The inaugural awards were introduced by the late Mayor Ed Lee in 2017, and in 2021, Mayor London Breed opened the first virtual awards ceremony.

## Strengthening Language Access Rights

Held a two-part series of special hearings on the Language Access Ordinance and how to improve language access in San Francisco; together with OCEIA, conducted an 11-language community survey of Limited English Proficient (LEP) and immigrant community members on their experience accessing services in their language during the pandemic; and provided input on the Board of Supervisors' plan for proposed amendments to the Language Access Ordinance.

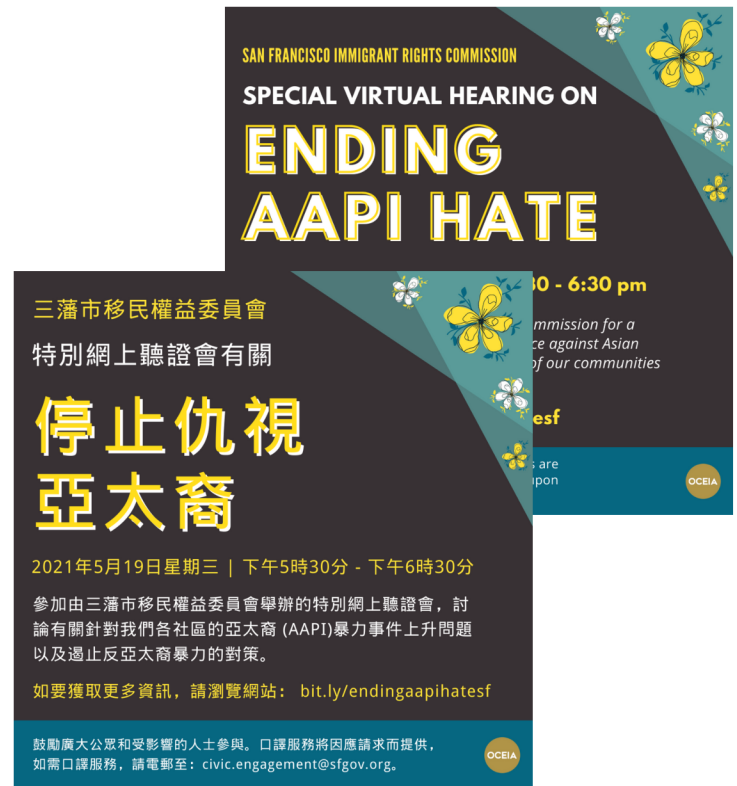


## Advancing Immigrant Parent Voting

Listened to testimony from representatives of the Immigrant Parent Voting Collaborative and issued a resolution supporting the Board of Supervisors' 2021 measure to reauthorize immigrant parent voting in School Board elections.

## Fighting to End AAPI Hate

Hosted a special hearing on ending anti-Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) hate, developed recommendations for the Mayor's Office and City departments, and distributed OCEIA's multilingual resource guide for survivors to get help, and for all San Franciscans to report and prevent hate incidents.



## Expanding the Rights of Domestic Workers

Issued resolutions supporting the California state bill to establish employment safety standards for household domestic services, SB-321, which was signed into law by Governor Newsom in 2021, and the San Francisco Domestic Workers' Equal Access to Paid Sick Leave Ordinance, which was approved by the Board of Supervisors and signed by Mayor Breed in 2022.

## Supporting Haitian Migrants and Afghan Assistance Efforts

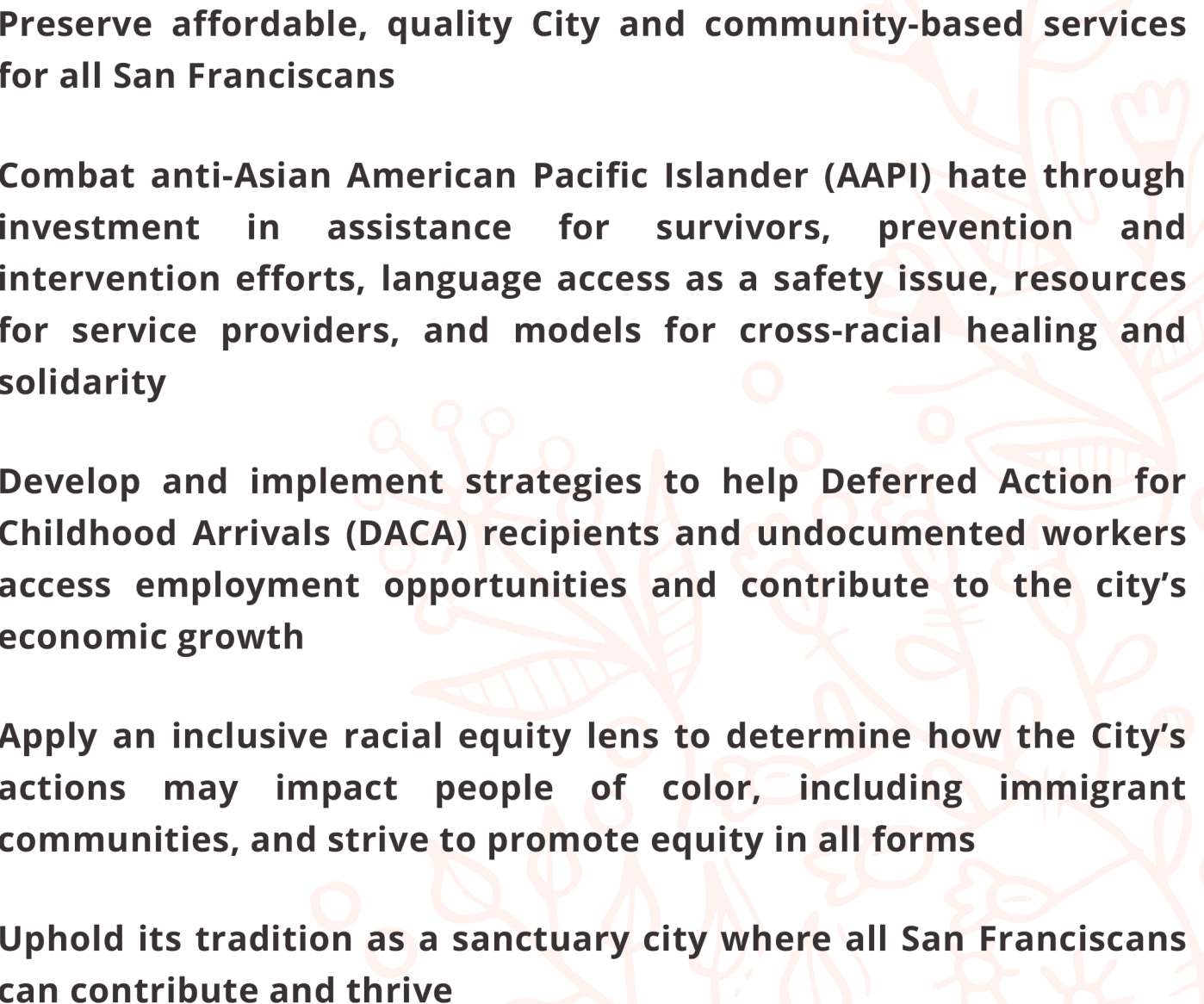
Held a special hearing on Haitian migrants and Afghan assistance efforts in the Bay Area and supported OCEIA's expansion of fee assistance through the non-profit organization Mission Asset Fund for Afghans seeking humanitarian parole.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

*The Immigrant Rights Commission recommends that the City and County of San Francisco:*

- Support inclusive policies that keep families together and treat all people, including immigrants, with dignity and respect
- Ensure that the economic recovery includes all San Franciscans, regardless of where they were born or what language they speak
- Help keep San Franciscans in their homes by addressing the housing, nutritional, educational and health care needs of vulnerable or underserved families, including immigrants
- Strengthen language access rights and services as a pathway to meaningful engagement and full participation of immigrants; invest in language services and necessary staff to improve language access capacity; encourage departments to continually work to improve language access by partnering with OCEIA to ensure comprehensive language access policies and protocols; and update the Language Access Ordinance to develop protocols that address the language needs of community members during emergency and crisis situations



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- **Preserve affordable, quality City and community-based services for all San Franciscans**
  - **Combat anti-Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) hate through investment in assistance for survivors, prevention and intervention efforts, language access as a safety issue, resources for service providers, and models for cross-racial healing and solidarity**
  - **Develop and implement strategies to help Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients and undocumented workers access employment opportunities and contribute to the city's economic growth**
  - **Apply an inclusive racial equity lens to determine how the City's actions may impact people of color, including immigrant communities, and strive to promote equity in all forms**
  - **Uphold its tradition as a sanctuary city where all San Franciscans can contribute and thrive**

# SAN FRANCISCO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION

***Be informed, get engaged and speak out!***

The full Immigrant Rights Commission meets the second Monday of each month at 5:30 pm. All meetings are accessible and open to the public.

Visit [sf.gov/immigrantrights](https://sf.gov/immigrantrights) for more information.

## COMMISSIONERS & STAFF

### Commissioners:

Celine Kennelly, Chair  
Mario Paz, Vice Chair  
Elahe Enssani  
Haregu Gaime  
Ryan Khojasteh  
Zay David Latt  
Nima Rahimi  
Franklin M. Ricarte  
Jessy Ruiz  
Lucia Obregon Matzer  
Sarah Souza  
Alicia Wang

### Former Commissioners:\*

*Donna Fujii  
Camila Andrea Mena  
Paul Barragan-Monge  
Amro Radwan  
Luis Zamora*

**Executive Committee:** Chair Kennelly, Vice Chair Paz, Members Khojasteh, Ricarte, Souza.

*The Executive Committee meets the fourth Wednesday of each month at 5:30 pm.*

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### Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs

#### Richard Whipple

Acting Director | Acting Commission Secretary

#### Elena Shore

Senior Immigrant Affairs Advisor | Commission Clerk

#### Jamie L. Richardson,

Senior Communications Specialist | Report Design

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***The IRC thanks former Executive Director and Commission Secretary Adrienne Pon for her leadership and invaluable contributions to the Commission.***

\*Commissioners resigned in 2021-2022