



A San Francisco
FOR ALL

SAN FRANCISCO
IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION

REPORT 2023



An aerial view of San Francisco, California, showing the city's dense urban landscape. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text is centered and reads: "SAN FRANCISCO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION" in white, "A SAN FRANCISCO FOR ALL" in yellow, and a quote in white: "We endure. We adapt. We lead. In this city, anything is possible." Below the quote, it says "Mayor London N. Breed, 2023 State of the City" in white. The background shows various buildings, including the Transamerica Pyramid and the San Francisco City Hall dome.

SAN FRANCISCO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION

A SAN FRANCISCO FOR ALL

"We endure.
We adapt.
We lead.

In this city,
anything is possible."

Mayor London N. Breed,
2023 State of the City

1 *in* **3**



**San Francisco residents
is an immigrant.**

With **34.1%** 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: United States Census Bureau's 2017-2021 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. Composed 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 first version of 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. In 2021, the IRC held a two-part series of special hearings on the Language Access Ordinance, and OCEIA conducted an 11-language community survey of Limited English Proficient (LEP) community members, to inform the Board of Supervisors and City departments on how to improve language access in San Francisco.

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. When debates about modifying the City's sanctuary status resurfaced in 2023, the IRC reaffirmed its support for the City's longstanding policy.

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

Two years into the Biden administration, immigration reform in Congress remains elusive. While the Biden administration has reversed some of the previous administration's immigration policies, its attempts to end others have been blocked by court challenges. At the same time, certain policies of the previous administration to restrict access to asylum have been continued or expanded, and others have been recreated. An increase in asylum seekers and other migrants arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border has highlighted questions about what kind of nation the United States aspires to be. Meanwhile, many immigrants who have lived here for decades face uncertainty over the future of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which has provided temporary protection from deportation and a work permit to hundreds of thousands of immigrants who were brought here as children.

"The IRC holds firm in its commitment 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."

This report covers the work of the IRC in 2022, as San Francisco continued to grapple with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, and immigrants and communities of color were disproportionately impacted. With a dramatic spike in homelessness among Latino communities in San Francisco – up 55% since the start of the pandemic – the IRC heard first-person stories of San Franciscans who discussed the need for more affordable housing in the city. The IRC met with City departments to address anti-Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) hate incidents, which increased sharply during the pandemic. It also heard from community members about critical educational needs, from the concerns of newcomer students to parents' ability to have a say in their children's education in the wake of a 2022 legal challenge to Immigrant Parent Voting.

In response to these challenges, the IRC continued its work to combat anti-AAPI hate, support Immigrant Parent Voting, advocate on behalf of immigrant students, and include immigrant perspectives in conversations about the future of housing in San Francisco. The IRC holds firm in its commitment 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

As part of the IRC's efforts to highlight the contributions and achievements of immigrants, the IRC produced a virtual Immigrant Leadership Awards celebration to honor immigrant leaders and champions of immigrant rights. 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.



UCSF Health and Human Rights Initiative



Anjali Rimi,
Parivar Bay Area



Tatiana Alabsi,
Tenderloin Safe
Passage



Norma Carrera,
La Voz Latina



Julian Jaravata



Adrienne Pon



La Cocina

*Honorees from the
2022 Immigrant
Leadership Awards*

Fighting to End AAPI Hate

As a follow-up to its work to address anti-Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) hate, the IRC held a special hearing to hear from City departments on actions they have taken to confront anti-AAPI hate in the past year. During the previous year, the IRC hosted a special hearing on ending anti-AAPI hate, developed recommendations for the Mayor's Office and City departments, and distributed OCEIA's multilingual resource guide to report, seek help for, and prevent hate incidents.

Defending Immigrant Parent Voting

Spoke out in support of Immigrant Parent Voting, the right of noncitizen immigrant parents to vote in School Board elections. This historic right was approved by San Francisco voters in 2016 and reauthorized in 2021. When the ordinance was challenged in court in 2022, the IRC partnered with the Immigrant Parent Voting Collaborative in defense of parents' right to have a say in their children's education, regardless of immigration status. The City and County of San Francisco defended Immigrant Parent Voting in court, and appealed the court decision that revoked this right.



Commissioners support the Immigrant Parent Voting Collaborative at San Francisco City Hall.

Supporting Immigrant Students at CCSF, SFUSD

Advocated on behalf of immigrant students by sending a letter to City College of San Francisco (CCSF) that called on CCSF to maintain and expand programs serving immigrant students, including English as a Second Language (ESL), Cantonese, and other world languages; and sending a letter to the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) that called on SFUSD to provide mental health and other resources for newcomer students.

Including Immigrant Perspectives in Plans for the Future of Housing in San Francisco

As San Francisco discussed plans for the future of housing in the city, the IRC hosted a special hearing with City and community partners to ensure that immigrant perspectives were included.

Affirming Solidarity with the Women of Iran

Released a statement in solidarity with the women of Iran who are speaking out against injustice. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved a resolution in support of the human rights of the people of Iran.

Highlighting the Needs of Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Immigrants

Supported the first annual gathering centering the needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming immigrants in San Francisco. The Transgender Immigrant Symposium was co-hosted by Parivar, El/La Para TransLatinas, the LGBT Asylum Project, the GLBTQ+ Asian Pacific Alliance, Sen. Scott Wiener, the Office of Transgender Initiatives (OTI), and the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA).



The Inaugural San Francisco Transgender Immigrant Symposium



Commissioners take their oath of office at San Francisco City Hall.



Chair Kennelly joins San Francisco City and community leaders in celebration of Citizenship Day, 2022.

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 and innovative models such as Universal Basic Income include 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; and ensuring that immigrants' perspectives are included in such planning.
- Maintain funding for immigrant-serving organizations and continue to invest in immigrants and people of color, who have been hardest hit during the pandemic.
- Preserve affordable, quality City and community-based services for all San Franciscans.

- 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.
- 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, in preparation for a potential end to DACA.
- 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 for more information.

COMMISSIONERS & STAFF

Commissioners:

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

Former Commissioners:*

Camila Andrea Mena
Donna Fujii
Ryan Khojasteh

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

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

Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs

Jorge Rivas

Executive Director | Commission Secretary

Elena Shore

Senior Immigrant Affairs Advisor | Commission Clerk

Jamie L. Richardson,

Senior Communications Specialist | Report Design

*Commissioners resigned in 2022