



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION

CERTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COMMISSION

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

Executive Director:

Jorge Rivas
Office of Civic Engagement
& Immigrant Affairs

Resolution No. 2023-01

Date Passed: February 22, 2023

[RESOLUTION ON USCIS PROPOSED FEE CHANGES]

Resolution of the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission calling on the City and County of San Francisco to provide public comment on the USCIS fee changes under review.

February 13, 2023

San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission

Ayes: 8- Commissioners Chaudhary, Enssani, Gaime, Latt, Obregon, Rahimi, Ricarte, Souza.

Nays: 0

February 22, 2023

San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission Executive Committee

Ayes: 4- Chair Kennelly, Vice Chair Paz, Commissioners Ricarte, Souza.

Nays: 0

File No. IRC2023-01

I hereby certify that I am the duly appointed Secretary of the Immigrant Rights Commission and Executive Director of the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs and that the attached resolution was adopted and approved by the Immigrant Rights Commission of the City and County of San Francisco at properly noticed meetings on February 13, 2023 (Full Commission) and February 22, 2023 (Executive Committee).

Jorge Rivas

Executive Director

Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs

Date: March 9, 2023

1 [RESOLUTION ON USCIS PROPOSED FEE CHANGES]

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3 **[Resolution of the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission calling on the City and**
4 **County of San Francisco to provide public comment on the USCIS fee changes under**
5 **review]**

6
7 WHEREAS, The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is currently
8 reviewing a [proposed fee change](#) for various immigration applications, including fee
9 increases; and

10 WHEREAS, The proposed fee increases would disproportionately affect low-income
11 individuals and families and create barriers to citizenship, family reunification, and other
12 benefits of legal status; and

13 WHEREAS, One in three San Francisco residents (34.1%) is an immigrant, according
14 to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017-2021 American Community Survey; and

15 WHEREAS, Immigrants in San Francisco have started businesses, paid taxes,
16 contributed to the local economy, and worked on the frontlines of pandemic response; and

17 WHEREAS, Immigrants and communities of color in San Francisco also have been
18 disproportionately impacted by the economic impact of the pandemic, with many losing jobs
19 and struggling to make ends meet; and

20 WHEREAS, Nearly 50,000 San Franciscans are eligible to naturalize, according to
21 [USC's Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration \(CSII\)](#); and

22 WHEREAS, San Francisco works with community-based organizations to make
23 citizenship more accessible for eligible lawful permanent residents. The [San Francisco](#)
24 [Pathways to Citizenship Initiative](#), founded in July 2013 as a public-private
25 partnership between local foundations and the City and County of San Francisco's Office of

1 Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) to promote citizenship among San
2 Francisco’s naturalization-eligible immigrants, has helped 12,180 people apply for citizenship
3 and completed 7,000 fee waivers, saving participants a total of \$21,533,145 in fee waivers
4 and free legal services; and

5 WHEREAS, Becoming a U.S. citizen has economic benefits, not only for individuals
6 and their families, but for the local and national economy; a 2012 study (“[Citizen Gain](#)”) found
7 that citizenship alone could increase individual earnings by 8 to 11 percent and lead to a \$21-
8 45 billion increase in earnings to the national economy over a decade; and

9 WHEREAS, Increasing the cost of naturalization, even if minimally, would mean more
10 people would be priced out of citizenship. Affordability is already a major obstacle for
11 immigrants who want to apply to become U.S. citizens, according to a [report](#) by the National
12 Immigration Forum and the New Americans Campaign; and

13 WHEREAS, Other filing fees, such as the application cost for a family-based green
14 card, would see even more substantial increases, making them out of reach for many low-
15 income families; and

16 WHEREAS, USCIS is proposing higher fees for paper applications, in efforts to
17 encourage applicants to file online. However, many applicants may not have the ability to file
18 online. According to San Francisco’s [Digital Equity Strategic Plan](#), one in eight San Francisco
19 residents still lacks high-speed home internet, in particular San Franciscans who are low-
20 income, seniors, Limited English Proficient (LEP), or who have a disability. USCIS’s proposal
21 would mean our most vulnerable residents would be asked to pay higher prices; and

22 WHEREAS, USCIS’s proposal to codify its ability to increase fees annually according
23 to inflation adds to our concerns that some of the individuals and families most in need of
24 assistance would be unable to afford it; and

25

1 WHEREAS, San Francisco welcomes the USCIS proposal to maintain the fee waiver
2 and add exemptions for certain humanitarian programs. However, many individuals do not
3 qualify for the fee waiver and yet do not earn enough to pay the filing fees. By increasing fees
4 for many immigration applications, USCIS is creating additional barriers for our low-income
5 residents; and

6 WHEREAS, San Francisco is a sanctuary city that has long been committed to
7 protecting the rights and well-being of its immigrant community; now therefore be it

8 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission calls on the City
9 and County of San Francisco to provide public comment on the proposed USCIS fee
10 increases and how they would adversely affect San Francisco's immigrant community using
11 the process described on the [Federal Register website](#) by March 13, 2023; and be it

12 FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Mayor's
13 Office.

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