ONE CALIFORNIA: COORDINATING CITIZENSHIP & IMMIGRATION ASSISTANCE
2015-2016 BUDGET

BACKGROUND:

On November 20, 2014, President Obama announced administrative action that will provide relief for millions of undocumented immigrants across the country. The expansion of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and the creation of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program will provide eligible immigrants work authorization and temporary protection from deportation. Additionally the President acknowledged the barriers that impede access to citizenship for lawful permanent residents. In California, over 1.5 million immigrants are estimated to be eligible for DACA and DAPA, and 2.48 million lawful permanent residents are eligible to naturalize. The White House has estimated that administrative relief could boost California’s economy by almost $27.5 billion over the next ten years. It is in California’s best interest to ensure a successful transition thereby allowing our state to fully reap the economic benefits that will result from work authorization, citizenship, and protection from deportation.

PROPOSAL:

From 1999 to 2008 California, through the Naturalization Services Program (NSP), provided funding to community based and legal services organizations to assist eligible lawful permanent residents to become naturalized citizens. That assistance ensured that hundreds of thousands of California’s immigrants achieved the right to vote and a strong identification with our country’s institutions, civic networks and cultural life.

Building on this program’s model is absolutely necessary to meet the needs of California’s immigrant communities. With an initial investment, California can support immigrants currently eligible for citizenship or DACA (2012) and have an infrastructure in place and ready to support the new administrative relief programs when the application process commences. Providing state assistance for immigrants to apply for naturalization or a lawful present status is the next step for our Golden State to lead on immigrant integration. We ask that $20 million be appropriated, through the Department of Social Services, to assist qualified nonprofits to provide education, outreach and application assistance for lawful permanent residents eligible for citizenship and undocumented immigrants eligible for administrative relief.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALIFIED FOR</th>
<th>ESTIMATED ELIGIBILITY</th>
<th>GRANTED</th>
<th>APPLICATION FEE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals (DACA, 2012)</td>
<td>358,000</td>
<td>186,729 (YTD)</td>
<td>$465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalization</td>
<td>2.48 Million</td>
<td>164,792 (2013)</td>
<td>$680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Relief – Expanded DACA &amp; DAPA</td>
<td>1,214,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>$465</td>
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</tbody>
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Based on estimates from the Migration Policy Institute and data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

BREAKING BARRIERS THROUGH EDUCATION, OUTREACH & APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

There are large numbers of immigrants who are unable to achieve citizenship or apply for lawful status, despite their eligibility, because of a number of challenging barriers. California’s investment through a collaborative and community-based model would enhance and expand the access to communities, particularly in areas of the state with larger and more language diverse immigrant populations.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Fear & Misinformation: This investment will encourage leveraging of resources and collaboration with local ethnic media and other local partners to fight misinformation around eligibility and highlight the positive outcomes of receiving the benefits from DACA, DAPA, and citizenship.

For more information please contact Gina Da Silva at gdasilva@caimmigrant.org or 916.448.6762.
Document Requirements: The evidentiary requirements for identity, residency, and education attainment can be onerous since eligible immigrants may not have created a detailed paper trail to avoid the threat of deportation. Having the support of certified and experienced representatives to assist with this process is essential.

Cost of Application: The cost to naturalize is currently up to $680 for lawful permanent residents and DACA/DAPA applicants will face a cost of $465 every three years to apply for deferred action. Community based organizations and service providers connect eligible low-income applicants to programs that assist with application costs through lending circles or low interest loans.

Access to Legal Services: Access to low cost accredited legal services assistance is very limited and in many cases still comes with an average fee of $200 due to the substantial work involved in reviewing eligibility, preparation of required documentation and processing the application. While providing temporary relief, DACA is a request for deferring deportation and can have serious consequences if an applicant is not fully aware of the eligibility requirements. For immigrants with more complicated DACA cases, due to time away from school, residency inconsistencies or legal matters, additional legal assistance and resources are necessary.

Naturalization Interview & Exam: Requirements for naturalization include an English and Civics exam as part of the interview with a U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services officer. This exam is in addition to 20-page application. The assistance provided by community based organizations and legal service providers ensures that applicants are well prepared to complete these requirements successfully and are not deterred by the complex process.

Capacity & Infrastructure: While community based organizations have developed the services, and in some regions, the networks to outreach and provide services and assistance for DACA applicants, their capacity and resources are unable to serve the overwhelming numbers of applicants seeking assistance.

BUILDING INVESTMENT & INTEGRATION IN OUR GOLDEN STATE

In California, immigrants and their children make up over 42% of our population. They are contributing over $650 billion to California’s GDP and the implementation of administrative relief will provide an estimated boost of almost $27.5 billion over the next ten years. Our state’s growth and continued economic and societal well-being depends on the successful integration of these new Americans. As immigrants integrate, they contribute to a state’s economic growth and maximize federal dollars by finding better jobs, increasing their incomes, buying homes, and increasing tax revenues. For DACA and DAPA beneficiaries the work authorization alone provides access to a wider range of opportunities. A report from the USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration shows that California’s immigrants experience an average increase in individual earnings of 11 to 14% after naturalization. As a nation and state of immigrants, our collective well-being depends on the success of our newcomer population. The state’s support of citizenship and DACA/DAPA services increase civic participation and allow more immigrants to obtain work authorization, access jobs, and most importantly be protected from deportation. Los Angeles and San Francisco have announced local public-private partnerships to support the capacity of these services however the populations eligible for these programs extend well beyond those municipalities and there are particular concerns for parts of the state that lack the infrastructure to support this work.

A strongly coordinated partnership between the state and community partners and service providers will be a building block for meaningful integration of all Californians in our state. This investment is small in comparison to the benefits that California will reap.

For more information please contact Gina Da Silva at gdsilva@cimmigrant.org or 916.448.6762.

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1 http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/CA
5 Qualified non-profits include Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) accredited community-based organizations or legal service providers, with a minimum of 3 years of experience handling outreach and/or legal services related to federal deferred action programs or naturalization.
8 Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII) at the University of Southern California. Citizen Gain: The Economic Benefits of Naturalization for Immigrants and the Economy – State-Level Results. December 2012