



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: April 26, 2022

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

COUNTY ACTION TO ADDRESS TERMINATION OF TITLE 42: ADDRESSING THE NEED FOR RESPITE MIGRANT SHELTER (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

Over the past four years, the U.S.–Mexico border has seen an increase in migrants seeking asylum from humanitarian crises around the globe. Federal law allows people from other countries to seek asylum in the United States if they fear persecution at home. They must be present in the U.S. and prove that they have a fear of persecution on one of five grounds: race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social class. However, in March 2020, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) put into effect Title 42, a law that prevented those seeking asylum from entering the U.S. Title 42 was a mitigation effort meant to control the spread of COVID-19. As a result of Title 42, the U.S. stopped processing asylum seekers who arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border asking for humanitarian protection.

On April 1, 2022, the CDC released a media statement indicating the intent to terminate Title 42 on May 23, 2022. With this announcement, the backlog of asylum seekers who have been waiting at the U.S.-Mexico border will be processed for asylum. As a welcoming community that reaffirmed its commitment to accept refugees and newcomers, the County of San Diego should be prepared for an increase in individuals and families seeking asylum while creating pathways for them to safely reach their final destination.

Since immigration regulations are not under local authority, today's actions will create an ad-hoc Board of Supervisors subcommittee to address both short-term and long-term goals. Additionally, the action will direct the Chief Administrative Officer to provide immediate assistance in identifying temporary respite sheltering for the anticipated increase of individuals and families who will be seeking asylum and will ensure better coordination amongst different government agencies, NGOs, and local jurisdictions. Today's actions will also seek to work with our federal and State delegations to seek reimbursement; work on legislative policy, and advocate for funding resources that would allow the County to provide on-going services to asylum seeking families, individuals, and partner with NGOs.

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RECOMMENDATION(S)

VICE CHAIR NORA VARGAS AND CHAIR NATHAN FLETCHER

1. Appoint Chair Fletcher and Vice Chair Vargas to an ad-hoc Board of Supervisors sub-committee to address both short-term and long-term solutions for the influx of migrants entering San Diego County.
2. Find that the proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA guidelines sections 15269(c)
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to identify County property for a potential temporary respite shelter that could be used to temporarily shelter asylum seeking individuals and families and take actions necessary to effectuate such use.
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with federal and State delegations on legislative policy, including seeking funding resources, that would allow the County to provide necessary human services to asylum seeking individuals and families and receive reimbursements, since immigration regulations are not under local authority.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

For generations, the United States has experienced cycles of migration where the populations have varied from country of origin and circumstances. Individuals coming are fleeing violent conflict, war, and unlivable conditions. Migrants who arrive at the border are parents arriving with children or individuals fleeing their home country, looking for safety and an opportunity for a better life. While families await their application decision, it is imperative to provide safe respite shelter with supportive services to ensure the wellbeing of these vulnerable populations and the surrounding communities.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's actions. There is no change in net General Fund costs and no additional staff years. There may be fiscal impact associated with future related recommendations which staff would return to the board for consideration and approval.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

Over the past four years, the U.S.–Mexico border has seen an increase in migrants seeking asylum from humanitarian crises around the globe. Federal law allows people from other countries to seek asylum in the United States if they fear persecution at home. These asylum seekers must be present in the U.S. and prove that they have a fear of persecution on one of five grounds: race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social class. The top five countries of

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origin for those seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border are Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Peru, Romania, and Venezuela.

In March 2020, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) implemented Title 42 as a mitigation effort in the face of COVID-19. Title 42 comes from a 1944 public health law to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. On April 1, 2022, the CDC released a media statement indicating the intent to terminate Title 42 on May 23, 2022. With this announcement, the backlog of asylum seekers who have been waiting at the U.S.-Mexico border will be processed for asylum. While these asylum seekers are being processed, they may remain in the United States. Additionally, the federal government is expecting additional arrivals to increase at the southern border. As such, the County of San Diego should be prepared for an increased number of individuals and families.

Since 2018, Non-profit entities in San Diego County have stepped up and established temporary shelter to ensure individuals and families had access to food, medical care, legal services, and assistance with travel arrangements to their final destinations. If adequate shelter space is not made available swiftly, migrant families may have no choice but to seek accommodations at homeless shelters or on our streets. This would put an undue burden on already stressed unsheltered service providers.

To date, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) has provided vaccines for this migrant population and provided support and training for shelter staff to address public health concerns. HHSA provides County nurses, health professionals, and social workers to assist in health assessments, translation services, and linkage to local resources.

While responses to ameliorate the immediate anticipated challenges are underway from all levels of government, the need exists for long term solutions. Today's actions will create an ad-hoc Board of Supervisors subcommittee to address both short-term and long-term goals. Additionally, the action will direct the Chief Administrative Officer to provide immediate assistance in identifying temporary respite sheltering for the anticipated increase of individuals and families that will be seeking asylum and ensure better coordination amongst different government agencies, NGOs, and local jurisdictions. Today's actions will also seek to work with our federal and State delegations to seek reimbursement; work on legislative policy, and advocate for funding resources that would allow the County to provide on-going services to asylum seeking families, individuals, and partner with NGOs.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Article 18, Section 15269(c) of the CEQA Guidelines, as it involves specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency. The proposed actions will allow a non-profit entity to provide temporary shelter, access to food, medical care, legal services, and assistance with travel arrangements for asylum-seekers released in the County by federal immigration officials. The provision of these services will help ensure that those seeking asylum do not seek accommodations on the streets or at homeless shelters, which would place an undue burden on already-stressed homeless providers. Providing access to food and medical care will also help prevent the spread of disease and address public health concerns. Today's actions are therefore statutorily exempt

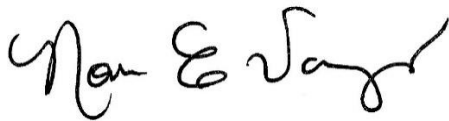
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from CEQA because it involves taking action necessary to prevent both a housing and public health emergency that the County may otherwise face as a result of the influx of asylum seekers being released in the County.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

The requested action supports the County's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan initiatives of Health, Housing, and Safety by focusing on policies and systems that ensure equal opportunity for health and well-being through partnerships and innovation that meet the needs of the community.

Respectfully submitted,



VICE-CHAIR NORA VARGAS
Supervisor, First District



CHAIR NATHAN FLETCHER
Supervisor, Fourth District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A