



CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
MARTIN J. WALSH

February 26, 2015

Cecilia Muñoz, Director  
Domestic Policy Council  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

León Rodríguez, Director  
U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services  
20 Massachusetts Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20549

***RE: Recommendations to the White House Task Force on New Americans on how to better integrate new Americans into communities and support local efforts to do the same***

Dear Directors Muñoz, Rodríguez and Members of the Task Force on New Americans:

On behalf of the city of Boston, I would like to take this opportunity to first commend you on the creation of this task force and to assure you that Boston fully supports this critical White House initiative. As you know, Boston is a city of immigrants and I am a son of immigrants. My administration has been at the forefront of immigrant integration and we are very proud of the work we have done thus far to support President Obama's Executive Actions on Immigration. My Office of New Bostonians has made great efforts to make sure that all Boston residents who may benefit from these Executive Actions have the information and resources they need to apply, while protecting them from fraudulent practices. Immigrants make up 27% of Boston's population, thus making it essential that every department have an immigrant integration plan and best practices in place to serve our diverse residents of Boston. This has been a priority of mine since day 1.

Aside from the recommendations outlined below by topic area, there are a few recommendations that I ask the task force to consider as they develop their work plan to implement recommendations gathered from cities across the country. These include:

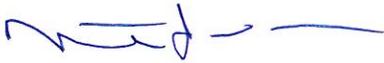
- Quarterly meetings starting this April for mayor's offices with the Task Force and with the WH Office of Intergovernmental Affairs in order to discuss priorities and solutions the issues explored via this process.
- Creation of the Integration Success Fund or something similar to provide greater federal assistance to support strategic local integration initiatives. In Boston, we have very strong allies in our philanthropic partners. In my first year in office, we secured a three year commitment from a local foundation to hire an Immigrant Integration & Empowerment Fellow who will be leading the city through a visioning process on Immigrant Integration. Federal support to implement that vision would be a tremendous asset to our city.

.../...

Also, within these recommendations we focused on 4 key areas: Public Health, Education (K-12), Economic Development & Small Business and Adult Education & Workforce Development. In addition to the issues noted here, we also support the broader set of issues and recommended actions submitted for the Task Force's consideration by MPI's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy.

Again, thank you for taking the time to consider these recommendations. Please know that my administration is available to you at any time to offer support and guidance as you embark on this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin J. Walsh', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Martin J. Walsh  
Mayor of Boston

# I. Public Health

The Boston Public Health Commission believes that healthy communities are the foundation of a safe and productive society. Healthy communities can only exist if we provide pathways for the meaningful involvement of its newest members and ensure that basic needs, including quality housing, healthcare and food are available to everyone. As such, we encourage the Task Force to adopt the following policy positions.

## A. *Expanding Access to Affordable Health Coverage*

- a. **Issue/Challenge:** The Affordable Care Act has provided 9.5 million Americans with quality, affordable health insurance coverage. Many of the new enrollees are lawfully present immigrants, which includes individuals granted deferred action. Yet, two months after President Obama announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in June 2012, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) issued regulations and guidance excluding DACA grantees from affordable health insurance options that are available to other non-DACA individuals also granted deferred action.[1] Prior to August 2012, DACA recipients were eligible for the same health programs that are afforded to other lawfully present immigrants, including those with a similar form of deferred action. This exclusion has carried into the recently announced expanded DACA and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and LPRs (DAPA) programs. The exclusion lacks policy justification and undermines the spirit and primary goal of the ACA, namely, expanding access to affordable health coverage for uninsured individuals. Excluding DACA and DAPA recipients from Medicaid, CHIP and the health insurance marketplaces will not eliminate their need for healthcare; it only shifts the cost burden of their care to health care providers and local and state governments, and in turn taxpayers.
- b. **Recommendation & Reasoning:** *The Task Force should recommend that HHS allow individuals granted relief under the President's Immigration Accountability Executive Actions to participate in affordable health coverage options under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in states that have taken up expanded coverage options.*

Restoring eligibility for DACA recipients would allow a population of generally younger, healthier individuals to pay for health insurance in the marketplaces, spread the risk across a larger pool of covered individuals, and thereby lower the cost of healthcare for everyone. Providing DAPA recipients with equitable health care access as other lawfully present immigrants will also reduce confusion for immigrant families seeking to enroll in health insurance marketplace plans, particularly those in mixed-status families.

Immigrants should be treated fairly by having access to the health programs their tax dollars support. Allowing DACA and DAPA recipients to participate in the ACA's affordable coverage options, and Medicaid and CHIP at state option, is an essential tool to ensuring these hard-working immigrants are able to optimize their full potential as new Americans.

## B. Language Access Services

- a. **Issue/Challenge:** Boston is a city of immigrants – over a third of our residents speak a language other than English at home. This cultural diversity is a tremendous asset to our city, but also creates challenges when we are trying to disseminate timely public health and safety messages in a way that reaches all of our residents. It also creates a barrier to true engagement with the immigrant community as we struggle to find adequate funding for interpretation services. Also, in federally-funded public housing, public

health and other programs, there is a lack of understanding about what funded agencies must do to guarantee inclusion of non-English speaking individuals. Executive order 13166 “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency”, issued by President Clinton in 2000, along with DOJ guidance requires federal agencies to establish language access plans and guidance for recipients of federal funds regarding “reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access” to federally-funded services for individuals with limited English proficiency.

**b. Recommendations:**

- i.* Think about ways that the federal government might support local communities to provide high quality translation and to promote a language justice approach to communicating with immigrants.
- ii.* The federal government should adopt strategies to increase support for language access services in health care, public health and public safety.
- iii.* Encourage federal agencies to clarify their rules around language access in federally-funded programs. In accordance with Executive Order 13166 outlined above, we suggest that each federal agency that provides funding to state and local governments also provide grant recipients with a summary of applicable language access requirements and model language access plans to help inform the implementation of appropriate language access measures in funded programs and activities.

**C. High quality data on immigrant health**

- a. Issue/Concern:** BPHC has made a priority of addressing racial and ethnic health disparities in the city of Boston. Key to this work is access to high quality health data that is disaggregated – meaning that it separates out different ethnicities within a certain racial group to better identify areas of poorer health outcomes. In Boston, aggregated data tells us that Asian Bostonians have health outcomes that are just as good and in some cases better than White residents. In reality, we know from an analysis of disaggregated data that there are higher rates of tobacco use and higher rates of cancer among certain Asian subpopulations and are able to target resources to address these issues. At the local level, however, we struggle to be able to do enough surveys to get an adequate sample to disaggregate.

**b. Recommendations:**

- i.* Identify ways that the federal government can provide high quality data on immigrant health. In particular, look for opportunities to disaggregate health data for racial and ethnic Asian subpopulations.
- ii.* Periodically oversample certain racial and ethnic groups and provide reports on the outcomes.
- iii.* Provide additional resources at the local level to conduct more complete health surveys.

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[1] See Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services, Letter to State Health Officials SHO# 12-002, August 28, 2012, and [75 FR 45029](#), July 30, 2010, as amended at [77 FR 52616](#), Aug. 30, 2012 excluding DACA recipients from the definition of “lawfully present”.

## II. Education (K-12)

### A. Language Support Services & Programs

- a. **Issue/Challenge:** Immigrant and refugee students often arrive in K-12 schools with gaps in their underlying education and low literacy in their native language. Therefore, they are not prepared for academic, grade level content in English or their native language, and require specialized instructional programs and services to meet promotion and graduation requirements. While Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) holds states and districts accountable for the academic performance and graduation rates of students who are English Language Learners, it can be difficult to meet the academic and graduation targets when students arrived with limited or interrupted formal education, who arrive with low literacy in their native language, or who arrive in secondary school grades. The Successor Agreement between the Boston Public Schools (BPS) and the Department of Justice requires the District to provide appropriate services consisting of ESL and SEI content instruction to all students identified as English Language Learners in grades K-12, but we are not obligated to provide these services to students in our pre-school (i.e., non-compensatory education grades.)
- b. **Recommendations:** The White House and Departments of Education should engage with local mayors, and school district leaders to:
  - i. Create goals and benchmarks for the effective integration of immigrant and refugee students in early childhood, elementary, middle and high school grade levels;
  - ii. Form educational consortiums comprised of leaders and experts from various sectors to identify and select effective instructional approaches to support immigrant and refugee students;
  - iii. continue to hold school districts accountable for implementing appropriate language programs and services to ELLs in all grades;
  - iv. Expand federal guidance on ELL programs and services for students in pre-school grades;
  - v. Create a federal definition of Students with Interrupted Education and accompanying guidance for best practices for educating this vulnerable ELL population to meet on-time graduation and other accountability targets. A federal definition would allow states and districts to better track and monitor this group of students.

### B. Before School, After School & Enrichment Programs

- a. **Issue/Challenge:** Quality childcare is one of the top integration needs of immigrant families, particularly for those who work, are enrolled in ESOL classes or job training programs. However, many immigrant and refugee students arrive late in the school year, and often miss the deadline to enroll in before or after school programs. Late arrivals also miss the opportunity to apply for enrichment programs in the arts, core academics, and STEM classes. Research demonstrates the positive and quantifiable effect of students who participate in enrichment programs. Activities before and after regular school hours have become increasingly important for helping immigrant students improve academic achievement, learn English, participate in enrichment activities, and decreasing the dropout rate. Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) offers funding to support language acquisition and literacy development of immigrant students and their families, but some expenditures that could help reduce barriers to participation in supplemental programming are not allowable. The Refugee School Impact Grant is offered through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The grant targets school-age immigrant and refugees between the ages of 5 and 18, but not students outside of this age range. The Refugee School Impact Grant Services can be used to fund English as a Second Language instruction, after school tutorials, and programs that encourage high school completion.

**b. Recommendations:**

- i. Federal agencies such as the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) should collaborate with school districts with large immigrant and refugee student populations, philanthropies, and business organizations to create and fund innovative before school, after school and enrichment programs for immigrant students.
- ii. School districts should review enrollment data, identify registration trends for immigrant students, and allocate funds to service late arrivals. In addition, federal guidance specifically addressing how districts can best serve late arrivals and the types of supplemental programming most beneficial to ELLs in early childhood/pre-school would be helpful.
- iii. The government should consider expanding the availability of federal funds for before/after school and enrichment programs to encompass ELL students in non-compensatory education grades (i.e., to include ELLs in early education/pre-school grades). In addition, the government may consider expanding the federal definition of immigrants, or create a separate funding stream, to support LEAs with large increases in their Puerto Rican migrant populations who also need linguistically and culturally appropriate services and programming.
- iv. Participation in before/after school programs often depends on the student's/families' access to transportation. The federal government should consider allowing the use of Title III funds to pay for public transportation bus/subway passes, which is less expensive than using Title III to pay for private/school buses. Doing so would free up additional Title III funds for expanded programming capacity. In addition, although this document is targeted toward ELL students who are of age 0-8, it should be noted that another barrier to participation for older ELL students is the need to work to provide extra family income. If Title III funds could be used to provide stipends to students participating in supplemental programming, it would help districts be able to provide these extra services to this at-risk ELL subgroup.
- v. Finally, adding the ability on the US DOE website to easily identify all federal grant opportunities targeted to ELLs/immigrants would help districts take advantage of available funds.

**C. Wrap-Around Services for at-risk ELL students**

- a. **Issue/Concern:** All children in the United States are entitled to equal access to a public elementary and secondary education, regardless of their or their parents' actual or perceived national origin, citizenship, or immigration status. This includes recently arrived unaccompanied children who are in immigration proceedings while residing in local communities with a parent, family member, or other appropriate adult sponsor. A pathway to obtain legal residency and foster care, in cases where relatives are not available to care for the child, are additional needs of unaccompanied immigrant minors. During their journey to the U.S., unaccompanied immigrant minors are often exposed to stressful or traumatic events, and, as a result, are at risk for developing post-traumatic syndrome which will require treatment and may impact students' academic achievement. Similarly, refugees, ELL students who have limited or interrupted formal education, ELLs who have not attended early childhood programs, and ELLs who are of low-income backgrounds may also require specialized wrap-around services that are both linguistically and culturally appropriate. The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is required to care for unaccompanied immigrant minors apprehended while crossing the border. Although unaccompanied immigrant minors do not attend the local school system while under the care of HHS, they do receive educational and other services from HHS shelters and HHS providers. Federal policy mandates that unaccompanied immigrant minors be released to the legal custody of relatives or sponsors. Under federal law, States and local educational agencies are obligated to provide all children – regardless of immigration status – with equal access to public education at the elementary and secondary level. This

includes children such as unaccompanied children who may be involved in immigration proceedings. Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney- Vento Homeless Assistance Act (reauthorized under Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act) ensures educational stability and protects the rights of homeless children and youth. The McKinney-Vento Act provides federal funding to states for the purpose of supporting district programs that serve homeless students, which includes unaccompanied immigrant minors.

**b. Recommendations:**

- i. The White House and Departments of Education and HHS should engage with local mayors and school district leaders to monitor the provision of appropriate wrap-around services (legal, mental health counseling, etc.) to unaccompanied immigrant minors while they are in HHS care, and after they are released to the legal custody of relatives or sponsors.
- ii. One constraint is that because districts cannot legally ask about a student's legal status, it can often be hard to identify student's wrap-around services needs during registration/intake in a timely manner. The federal government should provide guidance on how to best identify student support needs of SIFE, unaccompanied minors and other ELLs under this circumstance.
- iii. Seamless information sharing between various federal/state agencies (e.g., HHS) would expedite districts' abilities to best identify student needs upon arrival.

**D. Parent Engagement**

**a. Issues/Concerns/Current Law:**

- i. Immigrant parents value education and want to participate in events at their children's schools. However, various barriers often hinder their ability to participate in school activities and parent councils. For example, some immigrant parents do not often have the social capital or English skills to navigate the U.S. education system. Therefore, they may not be able to effectively communicate in English with teachers and school staff nor be able to help their children with homework written in English. In addition, immigrant parents may not be able to attend school events, because they have to work or attend a training program during the day. These barriers limit the opportunities for immigrant parents to be involved in school-based activities in a meaningful way.
- ii. In addition to research which demonstrates that active parental involvement contributes to positive educational outcomes and academic success, federal policy mandates school districts to develop and sustain opportunities for parent involvement. Both Title I and Title III of the *No Child Left Behind Act* oblige schools receiving federal funds to promote parental, family, and community participation in school-based programs. Under Title I, school districts using Title I funds must develop jointly with parents of children participating in Title I programs a written parent involvement policy. Parents must agree to the policy, and the district must distribute the policy to parents and the community.
- iii. Also, Section 1118 and 3302 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) mandate schools receiving federal funds to develop effective parental involvement strategies. Refugee School Impact Grants are offered through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The grants fund services that target school-age refugees between the ages of 5 and 18, but not for students outside of this age range. Services include English as a Second Language instruction, after school tutorials, programs that encourage high school completion and full participation in school activities, parental involvement programs, bilingual/bicultural counselors and interpreter services.

**b. Recommendations:**

- i. Federal agencies such as the USDOE, OCR and DOJ should continue to oversee how school districts use federal funds to engage parents, provide additional guidance on acceptable expenditures, and prioritize areas of need. For example, schools that do not have capacity in the target language should be required to use federal funds to hire bilingual staff or trained interpreters to help families better communicate with schools.
- ii. Workshops in the parents' native languages to help them become knowledgeable about the U.S. school system could be another prioritized use of funds.
- iii. Also, the federal government should encourage local universities, graduate schools of education, community based organizations, and parental advocacy groups to form partnerships or regional consortiums to advise school districts on how to create quality parental engagement workshops and opportunities for immigrant parents.
- iv. Expanding the Refugee School Impact Grants to include students younger than age 5 in early education/preschool programs may help districts best support ELLs and their families at the start of the education pipeline.

#### **E. Translation and Interpretation Services:**

##### ***a. Issue/ Concern/Current Law:***

- i. New immigrants often need translation and interpretation services because they do not speak English. In many cases, Families need translation of important documents in order to establish legal custody of minors, verify marital status, register their children for school, rent an apartment, and apply for a driver's license. In addition to translation services, immigrant families often need the support of qualified interpreters to help them communicate with local, State and Federal services.
- ii. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166 requires that any program receiving federal funds take reasonable steps to facilitate access for Limited English Proficient individuals, but this may be particularly challenging for low-incidence languages.

##### ***b. Recommendation:***

- i. There should be federal leadership in this area to ensure that all government agencies meet the federal requirements for providing effective translation and interpretation services and/or for training and credentialing of individuals providing such services in all government departments.
- ii. The government should considering requiring SEAs to provide sample documents (e.g., Title III parent notification letters) translated into the major home languages spoken in the state and in the largest LEA.

### **III. Economic Development & Small Business**

#### **A. Technical Assistance and Programming Support for Immigrant Entrepreneurs**

- a. ***Issue/Concern:*** Many immigrant entrepreneurs or aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs face barriers when attempting to access resources, including lack of awareness of resources, language and cultural barriers. Although federally funded materials, training and services are available for small business owners, such resources are not sufficiently promoted nor adapted to the specific needs of the immigrant entrepreneurs. Even when promotional materials reach the intended immigrant entrepreneur audience, there can often be

barriers providing the direct business assistance in the language and cultural competency most familiar and comfortable to the entrepreneur.

**b. Recommendations:**

- i. The Small Business Administration should fund training of and comprehensive marketing assistance for culturally competent business assistance staff and programming at the Administration and at local business assistance organizations.
- ii. The SBA should provide cities with a vetted list of service providers who are able to provide real-time, non-English and culturally-competent business assistance interpretation services to provide customer service to entrepreneurs interested in accessing resources.
- iii. Create “ESOL for Entrepreneurs” and “Micro Enterprise” programming for immigrants and refugees interested in starting their own businesses.
- iv. *Encourage small business associations and local chambers of commerce to support immigrant and refugee operated businesses.*

**B. Credit Repair & Loan Support**

**a. Issue/Concern:** Many immigrant entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs face challenges when attempting to establish, manage and repair their credit. Although the Small Business Administration and the FDIC do have some credit management tools and resources, additional culturally relevant materials and trainings are needed to assist these entrepreneurs in the establishment, management and development of their credit.

**b. Recommendation:**

- i. The Small Business Administration and the FDIC should develop online and paper training materials in a variety of languages to assist entrepreneurs in establishing, managing and repair their personal and business credit.
- ii. Design and support loan program models that would encourage small business start ups operated by immigrants and refugees. DOL’s new WIOA regulations could encourage entrepreneurship/business startups as positive outcome.

## **IV. Adult Education & Workforce Training**

**A. Challenges/Concerns/Current Practice or Statute:**

- a. Many immigrants have limited English skills, and therefore have difficulty securing jobs that pay a sustaining wage, because these types of jobs usually require a high level of English language proficiency.
- b. Large urban cities and school districts often have free or low-cost ESOL or job training programs for newly arrived immigrant parents. However, waiting lists for free or low cost ESOL and job training classes are long. Also, it takes time, exposure to, and consistent practice to learn how to speak a second language. Therefore, many immigrant and refugee adults feel compelled to take jobs that do not pay a family sustaining wage.
- c. Lack of follow-up resources for graduates of workforce development programs contribute to refugees and immigrant being stuck in entry level jobs and aware of career ladder opportunities.

- d. The Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) administers and coordinates programs that are related to adult education and literacy, career and technical education, and community colleges. OCTAE funds Adult English Language programs to help immigrant parents and others who have not yet developed proficiency in English to acquire the basic knowledge and skills they need to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens.
- e. School districts can use Title III funds to offer parents activities including family literacy (ESL) and parenting classes. Additionally, funds can be used for speakers who conduct informative parent sessions that enhance student language acquisition and mastery of core academic subjects.

**B. Recommendations:**

- A. Ongoing ESOL and GED training necessary during nontraditional hours for many refugees and immigrants employed in entry level jobs.
- B. Encourage and provide incentives to business and industry to support career pathways programs for new immigrants and refugees, and for those who have already hired immigrants and refugees, support workplace education programs that would afford workers the opportunity to compete for more responsible/higher paid jobs.
- C. Federal funding for refugees needs to be more significant and predictable each year. If so, more effective programming would be in place and ESOL and GED teacher turnover rates reduced.
- D. Tax incentives for employers to hire and/or upgrade limited English speaking workers.
- E. It would be helpful to identify federal funds for the State Department, Health and Human Services (HHS), or the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education to provide reimbursement or direct funding for integrated adult basic education, workforce training and career navigation and pathway supports required to assist refugees in obtaining basic skills and training sufficient to earn a family-sustaining wage. They should also consider working with State and local agencies to develop and fund apprenticeship programs for immigrant parents to work in viable fields, earn income, and learn English on the job.
- F. Some barriers to ELL parents' participation in ESOL classes or other parent engagement programming include transportation and the need to work. Allowing the use of Title III funds to provide parent stipends and/or public transportation passes could help address these barriers.