



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION

**San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission
Full Commission Meeting
San Francisco City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 416
November 10, 2025 at 5:30 pm PST**

Overview: Members of the Commission will attend this meeting in person. Members of the public are invited to observe the meeting in-person or remotely using Webex or by calling the phone number and entering the access code above. Everyone attending the meeting in person is encouraged to wear a mask throughout the meeting. Each member of the public attending in person may address the Commission for up to two minutes. Public speakers using consecutive interpretation assistance will be allowed to speak for twice the amount of the time. Members of the public may also submit public comment by email to: civic.engagement@sfgov.org.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Souza called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Present: Chair Souza, Vice Chair Chaudhary (left early), Commissioners Aljiran, Fara, How, Kennelly, Ng, Obregon, Padilla, Paz, Ratanapakdee, Ruiz, Traore, Wang.

Not present: Commissioner Abdou (excused).

OCEIA staff present: Director Rivas, Clerk Shore, Language Assistant Borres, Senior Spanish Language Specialist Cosenza, Language Access and Policy Manager De Carolis, Principal Field Coordinator Parise, Assistant Sarabia, Senior Chinese Language Specialist Wong.

2. Ramaytush Ohlone Land Acknowledgment

We, the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission, acknowledge that we are on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula. As the indigenous stewards of this land and in accordance with their traditions, the Ramaytush Ohlone have never ceded, lost nor forgotten their responsibilities as the caretakers of this place, as well as for all peoples who reside in their traditional territory. As guests, we recognize that we benefit from living and working on their traditional homeland. We wish to pay our respects by acknowledging the ancestors, elders and relatives of the Ramaytush Community and by affirming their sovereign rights as First Peoples.

Chair Souza read the land acknowledgment statement.

3. Announcements and General Public Comment (Information)

This item is to allow Director Rivas to provide announcements on interpretation services, public comment, and other information related to today's hearing; and to allow members of the public

to address the Commission on matters that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission and that do not appear on today's agenda.

Director Rivas made announcements on interpretation services and public comment, followed by in-language announcements by the interpreters in Spanish, Cantonese, Filipino, and Hindi. There was no general public comment.

4. Recognizing Commissioners Gaime and Senghor; Welcoming Commissioners How, Padilla, and Traore
(Information)

This item is to allow Director Rivas and Chair Souza to recognize Immigrant Rights Commissioners Gaime and Senghor for their service on the Commission; and to welcome newly appointed Immigrant Rights Commissioners Hans How, Laura Padilla, and Adoubou Traore.

Director Rivas and Chair Souza recognized Commissioners Gaime and Senghor for their service on the Commission, and welcomed new Commissioners How, Padilla, and Traore. Commissioners How, Padilla, and Traore introduced themselves and thanked the Commission. Chair Souza called for public comment, and there was no comment on this item.

5. IRC Hearing on Transgender Immigrants

a. Introduction (Chair Souza, Commissioner Ruiz)
(Information)

This item is to allow Chair Souza, Commissioner Ruiz, and Director Rivas to introduce today's hearing and provide an overview of the purpose of the hearing.

Chair Souza and Commissioner Ruiz thanked OCEIA staff and community members, and welcomed members of the public to the IRC's hearing on transgender immigrants.

b. Invited Speakers
(Information/Discussion)

This item is to allow the Commission to hear from invited speakers on the topic of today's hearing.

1. Honey Mahogany, Executive Director, San Francisco Office of Transgender Initiatives

Director Mahogany of the San Francisco Office of Transgender Initiatives (OTI) noted the increase in anti-transgender bills and laws across the country. Recent federal policies and executive orders include banning transgender people from serving in the military and removing gender identity markers from passports. Several health care providers

have shut down gender affirming care for transgender youth. Meanwhile, the California legislature has passed various protections for transgender residents, including making name and gender changes secure, allowing individuals to access appropriate bathroom facilities, and establishing online protections.

A 2023 survey by the Office of Transgender Initiatives found that 3 to 4 percent of San Francisco's adult population (about 24,000 people) identifies as transgender, almost four times higher than the national percentage. The top concerns respondents identified were housing, economic empowerment and employment opportunities, health care access, and social programs to reduce isolation.

Studies show that one out of two transgender people will experience homelessness at some point, and one out of two transgender adults have fled from other states to states like California. Many come to the United States because it is not safe to be transgender in their home countries, yet they also face hostility here. Between May 1, 2024 and May 1, 2025, there have been 932 anti-LGBTQ incidents reported across the country, 52 percent of which targeted transgender people. The number of transgender adults dealing with depression increased by 51 percent from 2014 to 2024.

OTI's priorities include collecting gender identity and sexual orientation data, continuing the program to end trans homelessness, and raising visibility for Trans Advocacy Week. OTI is also exploring ways to improve sanctuary policies. Although a resolution declares San Francisco a sanctuary city for transgender people, this is not written into law. Director Mahogany recommended codifying protections for transgender people through an ordinance and ensuring that there are no cuts to vital funding for organizations.

2. Sofía S. Ríos Dorantes, Deputy Director, El/La Para TransLatinas

Sofía Ríos, deputy director of El/La Para TransLatinas, noted that more than 80 percent of Latin American transgender women have been victims of sexual or physical violence before coming to the United States, according to Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. In the United States, transgender women immigrants experience detention in ICE facilities, where they are housed in male units; denial of hormone therapy or endocrine replacement therapy; interruption of antiretroviral treatment for those of us living with HIV; and an environment of abuse. In San Francisco, federal funding gaps have forced local organizations to fill the void with limited resources. She noted that transgender Latina immigrants living with HIV face a double stigmatization.

She recommended: 1. A permanent City trans and immigrant health fund that includes health care, HIV medications, and gender-affirming therapies regardless of immigration

status; 2. A City resolution urging Congress and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to maintain and implement Section 1557 of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Act (ACA); 3. Local oversight of detention centers and immigration custody programs to ensure compliance with international medical standards; 4. Sustained financial support for community-based organizations led by trans and Latinx people; and 5. Mandatory LGBTQ+ and HIV cultural competence training for medical, social service, and immigration personnel.

3. Anjali Rimi, Executive Director, Parivar Bay Area

Phanny Lun, director of programs and strategy for Parivar Bay Area, stated that 97 percent of transgender immigrants in San Francisco remain unserved or underserved. Anjali Rimi, executive director of Parivar Bay Area, discussed the findings of a focus group of 33 Spanish-speaking members. Many transgender Latina immigrants wait for years for asylum and then are misgendered in their asylum cases. Many undocumented transgender immigrants lack health care and some 68 percent rely on unsafe nonprescription hormones. Director Rimi shared the testimonial of K., who was told their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) was no longer valid because the federal government ended the 540-day extension of EADs. J Jha, a member of the founding board of Parivar Bay Area, shared their own experience and discussed the need to empower the transgender community, expand resources and visibility, hold capacity expansion trainings, and invest in food, mental health resources, food and housing security, and joy creation. Phanny Lun outlined Parivar Bay Area's recommendations for funding and infrastructure, including dedicated funds for transgender-led immigrant organizations, and creating a transgender immigrant hub; access and integration, including multilingual entry points; and well-being and leadership, including funding mental health support, supporting ongoing capacity-building for transgender immigrants, and including transgender immigrant identifiers in City data.

4. Kenan Arun, Executive Director, and Jhon Tesoro, Staff Attorney, LGBT Asylum Project

Kenan Arun, executive director of the LGBT Asylum Project, provided an overview of the impact of federal policies on transgender asylum seekers. Since incomplete or unsigned asylum applications can be rejected, applicants are encouraged to make sure their application is completed and signed. Following a court decision that new reasons for asylum can be treated as a new application, applicants are encouraged to mention gender-based violence and persecution at the beginning of the asylum application process. There have also been changes in filing fees, including the new \$100 initial asylum fee and pending annual fee, in addition to a change to electronic payments. Following the Executive Order on gender markers, the LGBT Asylum Project has held

online Know Your Rights clinics since many community members are afraid to attend in person. Decisions in asylum cases, which used to take one to two months, now take about nine months. Many immigration judges have been removed, and backlogs have increased. Director Arun recommended increased funding for appeals along with asylum cases, due to the increase in denials of applications; emergency funds for new fees; and capacity-building funds to create a resettlement manual for community members.

Chair Souza thanked speakers and invited Commissioners to ask questions.

In response to a question from Commissioner Obregon about codifying sanctuary laws, Director Mahogany suggested: 1. Re-establishing a training requirement for City employees through the Department of Human Resources (DHR); 2. Codifying the sanctuary city ordinance for transgender people; 3. Ensuring transgender individuals get access to gender-affirming care; and 4. Establishing protections for those who come to California from other states.

Vice Chair Chaudhary asked about transgender immigrants' fear to report crimes or access health care. Director Mahogany noted that services must be more welcoming to transgender immigrants who face systemic barriers, and Director Rimi discussed the under-representation of transgender leaders and the need for language access. In response to a question from Commissioner Obregon about health care access for new immigrants, Deputy Director Ríos discussed language barriers and lack of knowledge about how to navigate the system. Commissioner Ruiz asked about health care for transgender people experiencing homelessness, and Director Mahogany discussed Healthy SF, emergency health care for those who otherwise would not have access to it, and the possibility of expanding it to include gender-affirming care.

In response to a question from Commissioner Wang, Director Mahogany affirmed that gender-neutral restrooms are required.

In response to a question from Vice Chair Chaudhary, Director Mahogany stated that OTI is advocating for funds for legal services for transgender immigrants. Commissioner How asked about City funding for transgender immigrants, and Director Arun noted that the LGBT Asylum Project currently has a collaborative grant with El/La Para TransLatinas funded by OCEIA, to fund transgender asylum cases.

Commissioner Fara asked about legislation that could be harmful to community members, and Director Rimi noted that several harmful state bills did not pass the legislature. At the local level, training is not mandatory, and the City's transgender

sanctuary policy is a resolution, not a law.

In response to a question from Chair Souza about homelessness, Director Mahogany discussed the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing's funds for women and transgender people, and projects focused on ending transgender homelessness.

c. Public Comment

This item is to allow members of the public to address the Commission on matters related to the topic of today's hearing.

Chair Souza invited members of the public to make public comment.

1. Azeen Zia Ebrahimi discussed global equity and the need to do more than claim to be a sanctuary.

2. Lia McGeever, who identified as transgender, discussed what it means to be a sanctuary city when transgender community members are homeless because they cannot get a job or pay for housing; and the City's decision to end the GIFT Program for Black and Brown Trans people after it was challenged in court.

3. The third speaker discussed Commissioner Ruiz's non-profit organization and encouraged LGBTQ community members to seek it out.

4. Veronica, who spoke in Spanish through an interpreter, described her experience coming to the United States in 1987 and discussed Commissioner Ruiz's organization.

5. Morelia Saucedo, a transgender immigrant woman who came to the United States two years ago, discussed her experience being raped at the border, the help she received from El/La Para TransLatinas, and employment as a key concern.

6. Beverly, a transgender woman, discussed the de-institutionalization of gender-affirming care, the detention of transgender immigrants by ICE, and the forced labor and sexual assault experienced by transgender community members.

7. Atlanta Antonela asked how to the City can address the common needs of transgender immigrants, including the immigration process, housing, and health care.

8. The eighth speaker noted that there are many transgender asylum seekers in San

Francisco, discussed the City's previous emergency program, and asked how the City can create internships or employment opportunities for those who do not have work experience.

9. Phanny Lun of Parivar Bay Area noted that hate and transphobia often comes from community members' own communities and families, and discussed Parivar Bay Area's legal services.

10. Annie Xing of the Asian American Alliance Against Racism discussed an undocumented immigrant whose immigration hearing is coming up, and asked for help to ensure that he is not deported.

11. Anjali Rimi of Parivar Bay Area thanked the Commission for holding this hearing, asked them to continue to engage with the community, and suggested holding community focus groups.

d. Closing Remarks

(Information)

This item is to allow Chair Souza, Commissioner Ruiz, and Director Rivas to provide brief closing remarks on today's hearing.

Commissioner Ruiz, Chair Souza, and Director Rivas thanked invited speakers, community members, OCEIA staff and interpreters.

6. Action Item: Approval of previous minutes

(Discussion/Action)

Discussion and possible action to approve the minutes of the Immigrant Rights Commission's Full Commission meetings of September 8, 2025 and October 27, 2025.

Commissioner Obregon motioned to approve the minutes from the Commission's September 8, 2025 and October 27, 2025 meetings, seconded by Commissioner Fara. Chair Souza called for public comment and there was no comment on this item. The minutes were approved.

[IRC meeting minutes 9.8.25](#)

[IRC meeting minutes 10.27.25](#)

7. Language Access Quarterly Complaint Report (Ana De Carolis)

(Information/Discussion)

This item is to allow OCEIA Language Access and Policy Manager Ana De Carolis to provide the Commission with an overview of the complaints OCEIA has received and investigated from members of the public regarding the City's language services.

OCEIA Language Access and Policy Manager Ana De Carolis provided an overview of the complaints received and investigated by OCEIA during this quarter and answered questions from Commissioners.

Chair Souza called for public comment.

1. Anjali Rimi of Parivar Bay Area discussed the language needs of Asian Pacific Islander (API) transgender immigrant community members, and said language access is a key reason that many people do not access health care, housing, and immigration services.

[LAO Quarterly Report 11.10.25](#)

8. Old and New Business
(Information)

This item is to allow Commissioners to provide updates on items the Commission has previously discussed, and to introduce new agenda items for future consideration by the Commission.

Chair Souza said the Executive Committee will meet to discuss recommendations from October 27, 2025 special hearing and today's hearing. Commissioner Obregon asked Commissioners to send their recommendations from the previous hearing. Commissioner Fara provided an update on the Commission's travel ban resolution, which has been shared with the SFO director.

9. Adjournment

Chair Souza adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.