



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
December 8, 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.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Souza called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

Present: Chair Souza, Vice Chair Chaudhary, Commissioners Abdou, Aljiran, Fara, How, Kennelly (5:48 p.m.), Ng, Obregon, Padilla, Paz, Traore.

Not present: Commissioners Ratanapakdee (excused), Ruiz, Wang (excused).

OCEIA staff present: Director Rivas, Clerk Shore, Operations and Grants Administrator Chan.

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 (Director Rivas) *(Information)*

Community Resource Announcement

This item allows Director Rivas to provide a brief announcement on community resources.

Director Rivas provided announcements on interpretation and the SF Immigrant Forum, online at sf.gov/immigrants.

4. **General Public Comment**

This item is 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.

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

In addition to the public commenters listed below, the Commission received written public comments from Lisa King of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) SF, Jack Ostrofsky of Indivisible SF, Erica Wang of Indivisible SF, and Jennifer Martinez, who has benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, about the sudden dismissal of OCEIA Deputy Director Rich Whipple and the disruption it has caused the immigrant community and the City's immigrant serving programming.

The Commission also received a community petition demanding justice and accountability for Rich Whipple, which was signed by hundreds of community members and resent on December 8, 2025 by Val Suárez. The petition attests to Rich Whipple's contributions to the City; condemns his dismissal and demands transparency, explanation, and accountability; demands his immediate reinstatement as Deputy Director of OCEIA; calls on the City to allocate adequate resources to meet the needs of immigrant residents; and demands a plan from the City Administrator's Office and OCEIA's leadership outlining how immigrant-serving programs will continue without disruption, how existing community partnerships will be protected, and what resources will be dedicated to addressing gaps created by his removal.

Members of the public expressed their concerns about the dismissal of Rich Whipple from OCEIA.

1. Angelina Romano of SFUSD stated that there is no transition plan for services led by Rich Whipple, argued that his dismissal lacked humanity and vague communication is harming his reputation, noted that he remains eligible for City employment, expressed concern for other staff, and urged the Commission to call for transparency from the City Administrator's Office and OCEIA leadership and prevent a culture where dissent leads to dismissal.
2. Anamaria Alfaro, who benefited from OCEIA's Dream SF Fellowship, noted that removing a trusted leader harms the programs immigrant communities rely on, and asked the Commission to call for transparency, stand with the community, ask for Rich Whipple's reinstatement, and get answers about the future of OCEIA.
3. Evelyn Mata, who benefited from OCEIA's Dream SF Fellowship, noted that the petition had gathered about 500 signatures in a few days and called on the Commission to stand with the community, call for transparency, and ask for Rich Whipple's reinstatement.
4. Auner Barrios Vasquez, who volunteered at Good Samaritan Family Resource Center, discussed Rich Whipple's mentorship, guidance and support for immigrant communities, and stated that his dismissal has created chaos among immigrant communities.

5. Yelena Miakinina of the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County, who worked with Rich Whipple at OCEIA, noted that Whipple has supported immigrants since the founding of OCEIA in 2009. His work included mentoring fellows and community ambassadors, helping to establish the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative, supporting the vision of the Immigrant Rights Commission as a leader in strengthening immigrant and language rights, working on the Economic Recovery Task Force, and engaging in critical conversations on language access and community safety. She asked the commission to stand with community, call for transparency from leadership, and ask for Whipple's reinstatement.

6. Daniela Amado, who benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, said Rich Whipple was a mentor and supported her to pursue her Master's degree at UC Berkeley. She said Whipple has touched many lives, and asked the Commission to support him.

7. Lilian Juarez Armenta, a senior DreamSF fellow with OCEIA who is working to become an attorney, expressed concern over the sudden, unexplained dismissal of Rich Whipple and urged the Commission to call for transparency and to request a clear plan of how the City will protect immigrant-serving programs and partnerships following the removal of such an important leader.

8. Naomi Savea, a staff member with OCEIA's Community Ambassadors Program who spoke on her own behalf, stated that Rich Whipple built the Community Ambassadors Program into a cornerstone of local communities, emphasized his long-term commitment to connecting neighbors and empowering leaders, and urged the Commission to recognize his contributions and defend the program's continuity.

9. Jennifer Antunez Lopez, a community member who has benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, said the unexplained removal of Rich Whipple sends a harmful message to immigrant communities, noted that Whipple promoted transparency and accessibility of City services, and stated that removing a trusted leader during this time undermines programs and partnerships.

10. Diana Silva-Corral, a former USF McCarthy fellow with OCEIA, expressed disappointment over the abrupt dismissal of Rich Whipple, voiced concern for its impact on immigrant communities, noted the lack of transparency from City leadership, stated that nearly 500 people have signed the petition seeking justice for Whipple, and urged the Commission to call for accountability and demand a clear plan from City leadership.

11. Hector Moreno Bravo, who has benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, described the positive impact of Rich Whipple's mentorship on his career, noted the disruption caused by Whipple's removal, asked the Commission to seek transparency and accountability in the decision-making process, and questioned whether the decisions made by City officials are empowering the communities they serve.

12. Wilmer Ramirez, who spoke in Spanish with an interpreter, stated that although he was not

part of the fellowship program, Rich Whipple has helped him and served as his guide and mentor.

13. Valentina, who works for Mujeres Unidas y Activas, which is hosting a DreamSF intern, stated that Rich Whipple's removal undermines trust by breaking the City's promise of sanctuary, and urged the Commission to call for transparency, accountability, and justice.

14. Elisa Carrasco, who benefited from the DreamSF Fellowship's first cohort and is a legal professional, highlighted Rich Whipple's support for immigrant youth during the early DACA era, stated that his unexplained dismissal undermines OCEIA's values and sends a chilling message, and urged the Commission to call for transparency and demand his reinstatement.

15. Alejandro, who benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, noted that Rich Whipple's leadership helped immigrant families, expressed concern about the lack of explanation for his dismissal, and urged the Commission to push for transparency into the decision-making process that resulted in Whipple's dismissal, and to call for his reinstatement.

16. Perla Barraza, who benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, criticized the manner of Rich Whipple's dismissal, noted concerns about leadership accountability, future hiring practices, and the defunding of immigrant services, and asked the Commission to call for transparency from the City Administrator's Office and OCEIA leadership, to condemn the dehumanizing manner in which Whipple was dismissed, to demand to be part of the vetting process for a new deputy director, and to monitor leadership decisions.

Chair Souza reminded members of the public to use respectful language and said this matter was outside of the Commission's purview.

17. Sandra Flores, who benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, emphasized Rich Whipple's role in mentoring immigrant youth and advocating for community needs and urged the Commission to seek transparency and reinstatement.

18. Hernan Soto Acevedo, who benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship and now works at the San Francisco Public Library, expressed concern about the lack of transparency in Rich Whipple's dismissal, noted the importance of protecting immigrant-serving programs, and urged the Commission to call for accountability and a clear plan for program continuity.

19. Maria Jose Olea Gerardo, a former City Hall intern who was married by Rich Whipple, noted that public comment is meant for members of the public to speak on the concerns of immigrants, highlighted the community's demand for transparency, described Whipple's personal and professional contributions to immigrant communities, and asked the Commission to advocate for answers regarding his removal.

20. Ozgur, a current DreamSF fellow, described Rich Whipple's role in creating fellowship opportunities and supporting immigrant youth, called him an immigrant leader despite not having an immigrant experience, noted the disruption caused by his dismissal, and urged the

Commission to call for transparency and reinstatement.

21. Gaby, a current DreamSF fellow, expressed concern about the timing of Rich Whipple's dismissal during a critical period for immigrant communities, noted his long-standing advocacy, and asked the Commission to call for transparency and accountability.

22. Janice Cheung, a San Francisco native and Leadership SF alumna, called Rich Whipple a rare public servant who leads with integrity and heart, emphasized his history of leadership and advocacy for immigrant communities, noted the harm caused by the lack of explanation for his dismissal, stated that the Commission has moral authority, and urged the Commission to demand public answers and accountability.

23. Jamie Richardson, an OCEIA staff member who spoke on her own behalf, described Rich Whipple's foundational role in creating major immigrant-serving programs including San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative, DreamSF, Community Ambassadors Program, immigrant support and language access grants, and the newcomer support program. She noted the absence of due process in his dismissal, stated that his dismissal raises questions about OCEIA's future, and asked the Commission to hold the City accountable, seek clarity, and advocate for program stability.

24. Hector of OCEIA's Community Ambassadors Program stated that Rich Whipple's removal negatively affects immigrant-serving organizations, noted the community's need for answers, and urged the Commission to call for transparency.

25. Christy Deitrich, a City employee who spoke in her personal capacity as a community member, and coalition chair of the San Francisco Coalition for Asylee, Immigrant and Refugee Services (SF CAIRS), expressed concern about the lack of communication regarding Rich Whipple's dismissal, noted his role in creating the SF Immigrant Forum, and asked the Commission to seek transparency and provide answers to the community.

26. Lawrence Powell, a retired firefighter speaking as a member of the Black community, emphasized the broader impact of leadership decisions on immigrant and Black communities, noted the harm caused by removing a trusted advocate without explanation, and urged the Commission to demand accountability and transparency.

27. Jazmin Lopez Bailon, who benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, described Rich Whipple's role in supporting undocumented youth and immigrant families, noted the community's petition for justice, and asked the Commission to call for transparency and accountability.

28. Briseida Gonzalez, who benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, expressed concern about the lack of transparency in Rich Whipple's dismissal, noted the importance of leadership during uncertain times, and urged the Commission to advocate for his reinstatement.

29. Gerardo, who benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, criticized the manner of Rich

Whipple's dismissal, noted concerns about rushed hiring processes, and asked the Commission to review the decision and called for the OCEIA director to hold a community meeting to address questions and for Whipple to be reinstated.

30. Victor Hernandez, who benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, emphasized Rich Whipple's long-standing commitment to immigrant communities, noted the harm caused by his removal, and urged the Commission to demand transparency and reinstatement.

31. Abdul Secilmis, an immigrant community member, described Rich Whipple's role in helping newcomers feel welcome in San Francisco, noted the injustice of his dismissal, and asked the Commission to advocate for transparency and justice.

32. Sarafin Andrade, who benefited from OCEIA's DreamSF Fellowship, highlighted Rich Whipple's advocacy for immigrant voices, noted the community's demand for accountability, and urged the Commission to provide answers and transparency.

33. Valeria Suarez, a former OCEIA staff member and youth leadership award recipient, criticized the lack of response to the community petition, noted concerns about harmful dismissal practices, and asked the Commission to demand transparency and accountability.

Chair Souza acknowledged the contributions of Rich Whipple throughout his 16 years of service to OCEIA. She said that the Commission is an advisory body that elevates immigrant communities and does not have oversight over OCEIA.

5. Action Item: Approval of previous minutes

(Discussion/Action)

Discussion and possible action to approve the minutes of the Immigrant Rights Commission's Full Commission meeting of November 10, 2025.

Vice Chair Chaudhary made a motion to approve the November 10, 2025 minutes, seconded by Commissioner How. Chair Souza called for public comment and there was no comment on this item. The minutes were approved, with nine Commissioners voting in favor, and one Commissioner (Commissioner Abdou) voting against.

6. Action/Discussion Items:

a. Proposed Statement on H1B Visa Restrictions (Vice Chair Chaudhary)

(Discussion/Action)

This item allows Vice Chair Chaudhary to present her proposed statement on the fee for H1B visas for discussion and possible action by the Full Commission. During its November 13, 2025 meeting, the Executive Committee made edits and approved a motion for Vice Chair Chaudhary to revise the statement and bring it to the Full Commission for a vote.

Vice Chair Chaudhary presented an overview of the statement and answered questions from Commissioners. Commissioner Fara motioned to approve the statement, seconded by Commissioner Kennelly. Chair Souza called for public comment and there was no comment on this item. The statement was approved.

b. Proposed Resolution on Detention of Immigrants (Commissioner Obregon)

(Discussion/Action)

This item allows Commissioner Obregon to present her revised resolution on the detention of immigrants, including recommendations from the Commission's October 27, 2025 special hearing on immigration enforcement and local response. During its November 12, 2025 meeting, the Executive Committee developed recommendations from the special hearing and approved a motion for Commissioner Obregon to add them to the resolution and bring to the Full Commission for a vote.

Commissioner Obregon thanked the IRC Executive Committee, Vice Chair Chaudhary, Commissioner Ng, Commissioner Ratanapakdee, OCEIA staff, and the City Attorney's Office for their work on the resolution. Commissioners discussed suggested edits, and Vice Chair Chaudhary made a motion to add a reference to immigrant frontline workers, seconded by Commissioner Abdou. Chair Souza called for public comment and there was no comment on this item. The resolution was approved by the 12 Commissioners present.

7. Staff Reports

Director's Updates

(Information)

This item allows Director Rivas to provide brief updates on activities and announcements.

Director Rivas made an announcement about Rich Whipple's separation from OCEIA, expressed gratitude for his service, and stated that he could not speak to the reasons for the separation. He affirmed that OCEIA remains dedicated to serving the community, and said the intention of early recruitment for the position was to move swiftly with minimal disruption to services. He reminded Commissioners that their strategic planning retreat is scheduled for January 12, 2026, and that no Commission business would be discussed during their social gathering.

Chair Souza invited Commissioners to share their thoughts following today's public comment. Commissioners expressed concern over the way the Commission addressed public commenters, who left feeling like they were not heard; concern over the dismissal of Rich Whipple and its impact on OCEIA and the immigrant community; and interest in rebuilding trust with the

community and seeking guidance from the City Attorney's Office on how the Commission can respond and what actions it can take on this matter.

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.

Commissioner Paz suggested that the Commission hold a hearing on the impact of health care cuts, and asked that the item be added to the next Executive Committee meeting agenda. Commissioner Paz also suggested that the Commission respond to the public comments heard today. He suggested that OCEIA issue an immediate response with clarification and an assurance that its programs would continue. He suggested that the Commission seek advice from the City Attorney's Office on how the Commission can respond, and then issue a statement.

Commissioner Abdou suggested issuing an IRC statement to address the community's concerns and to let them know that the Commission heard them.

Vice Chair Chaudhary suggested inviting the City Attorney's Office to provide information on the IRC's rights and obligations in situations like this. Chair Souza noted that the City Attorney's Office would present to the IRC at its retreat in January.

Commissioner Obregon suggested issuing an IRC statement, asking the Executive Committee to address this, and recommended that OCEIA also make a statement acknowledging the transition and its work to ensure the work of the department remains a focus of the City. Commissioner Obregon also suggested that the Executive Committee discuss how to build back trust.

9. Adjournment

Chair Souza thanked the community and OCEIA, and adjourned the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

10. Social Gathering

Commissioners may attend a social gathering at Ebb & Flow, 294 Ivy Street, San Francisco, CA 94102. No Commission business will be conducted. The gathering is accessible and open to the public.

Commissioners attended a social gathering.

