

**CITY OF LONG BEACH
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

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March 13, 2018

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
City of Long Beach
333 W. Ocean Boulevard, 14th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Letter of Support of the Long Beach Values Act

Honorable Mayor Garcia, Members of Long Beach City Council, and City Manager Pat West:

The Human Relations Commission strongly expresses support for protecting all undocumented immigrants, refugees, and DREAMers. We as a commission have witnessed heartbreaking testimonies of our very own undocumented community members who live in fear, particularly mixed-status immigrant families. With over 26% of our citizens being foreign born, all undocumented immigrants and refugees are part of our community. Neither nationality nor citizenship define a community, and it should not be used to divide us.

It is crucial to state Long Beach stands with our immigrant neighbors and to draw a clear line between the roles of the federal immigration enforcement agency and our local agencies. This is about our values as the City of Long Beach. When our immigrant neighbors are in danger of being deported, we should stand by them, instead of having policies that help split up families and drive immigrants underground.

We are not confident that the Long Beach Values Act as it is written demonstrates that we stand by our immigrant communities. This policy perpetuates the narrative of "good immigrants" versus "bad immigrants," as individuals with decades old criminal convictions, convictions that they have served time for, can be used against them to make a case for deportation. Almost 16,000 Southeast Asian Americans have received deportation orders since 1998. More than 78 percent of those final orders were based on old criminal convictions, according to a Southeast Asian Resources Action Center

(SEARAC) report released in 2016. Southeast Asian immigrants are the largest community of refugees ever resettled in the United States, so the issue of deportation is always a looming threat. These deportation orders violate due process and doubly punishes our Cambodian community.

If we as a city want to send the message that inclusiveness is one of the core values we build our community on, then we cannot turn our backs on our immigrant communities. As a city with the largest Cambodian population outside of Cambodia, we are in a unique position to implement a policy that provides a sanctuary for all. We call upon you to amend the Long Beach Values Act so that it strengthens SB 54, and remove the carve-outs as stated by the Sanctuary Long Beach coalition. Further, we support the creation of a robust \$600K defense fund, to strongly demonstrate that there is weight behind our words.

The purpose and function of the Human Relations Commission is to “promote full acceptance of all citizens in the community in all aspects of community life, to recommend to city council measures, including legislation, which will serve to improve positive human relations and the elimination of discriminatory practices, and to enhance and improve mutual understanding and respect for all citizens of the community.” It is in this context that the Human Relations Commission submits this recommendation with a hope and vision of Long Beach where our city continues to embrace values of justice, equity, respect and dignity for all its residents.

Respectfully,

Amy Eriksen, Chair

Human Relations Commission