



Date: January 27, 2025

To: Yi-An Huang, City Manager

Fr: Carolina Almonte, Executive Director, Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship
Megan Bayer, City Solicitor

Re: Response to POR 2024-154 of December 9, 2024, regarding the City's Sanctuary/Trust Act City status, the protections provided by the 2020 Welcoming Community Ordinance, and the importance of ensuring non-citizens are treated with dignity and respect.

This memorandum has been prepared in response to Policy Order 2024-154 dated December 9, 2024, requesting “[t]hat the City Manager forward a letter to all Cambridge Organizations working with the immigrant populations, as well as all City Departments, reminding them of the City’s Sanctuary/Trust Act City status, the protections provided by the 2020 Welcoming Community Ordinance, and the importance of ensuring non-citizens are treated with dignity and respect.”

The Sanctuary City Resolution and Welcoming Communities Ordinance

On April 8, 1985, the City Council passed a Resolution declaring Cambridge to be a “Sanctuary City” to “[s]erve as a safe haven for refugees now residing in Cambridge until they can safely return to their homelands or until they receive federally recognized residency”. The 1985 Resolution specifically protected refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti by requiring that Cambridge not participate in the federal government’s persecution of those refugees or those offering “humanitarian assistance” to them. The Resolution also provided that “[n]o City employee or department request information or assist in the investigation of the citizenship status of Cambridge residents or condition the provision of City services or benefits on citizenship status. It also supported a bill that would extend refugee protection to Haitian refugees that at the time were offered to so-called “Cuban boat people.”

In 1999, the protection offered to refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti was extended to include all residents regardless of immigration status.

The City Council passed the Welcoming Communities Ordinance in or about February 2020. The Ordinance provides, among other protections, that City employees may not inquire about the immigration status of any victim, suspect, arrestee, 911 caller or other member of the public... except as required by 8 U.S.C. s. 1373.” It further provides that the Cambridge police may not arrest or detain an individual solely on the basis of an ICE detainer or ICE administrative

warrant. It provides more lenient though discretionary measures for an individual who is found to be driving without a license and provides that ICE agents shall not be allowed access to individuals in custody, without a warrant. The Ordinance provides measures to protect students who enroll in public school, among other measures.

The Ordinance therefore provides more complete and more specific protection to all immigrants and refugees, regardless of their country of origin than the 1985 Policy Order.

The Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship (“CIRC”)

An escalation in anti-immigrant rhetoric during the 2016 Presidential campaign brought heightened attention to the concerns of Cambridge’s immigrant population, particularly about their rights, legal options within the U.S. Immigration system, and personal safety. Therefore, the Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship (“CIRC”) was established in 2016 by an order of the City Council. CIRC works to address the needs of Cambridge’s immigrant communities. The Commission includes 11 volunteer Commissioners who are themselves immigrants or have experience serving immigrant communities.

Since CIRC’s inception, CIRC has provided resources, organized trainings and informational programs, and partnered with other City departments and community providers. To support this work, the Immigrant Services Liaison, Tagesech Wabeto, conducts outreach across Cambridge, and meets regularly with service providers, immigrant groups, and individuals to inform them about the broad range of City and nonprofit resources available.

CIRC has been actively coordinating Know Your Rights (“KYR”) trainings at host locations throughout Cambridge, at which experienced immigration attorneys from established immigrant rights organizations are invited to provide a workshop/training regarding immigrants’ constitutional rights while in the United States; highlight recent changes in immigration law; and encourage attendees to seek specific advice from qualified immigration law attorneys. Materials including “Red Cards” may be distributed by immigrant rights organizations at the KYR trainings. CIRC has assisted in having these materials translated in the seven predominant languages spoken in Cambridge. The KYR attorney/trainer explains how to use the Red Cards to assert one’s constitutional rights in various situations.

The first KYR training that CIRC is coordinating is tailored for community members and those enrolled at the Community Learning Center (“CLC”), which provides free educational programs for adults, including English language classes, adult basic education, and high school equivalency preparation. CLC serves as a key resource for immigrants and non-native English speakers, helping them gain skills for employment, further education, and community participation. The first two KYR trainings are scheduled for January 27, 2025, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and January 30, 2025, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Live interpretation will be available.

The second KYR training that CIRC is coordinating is tailored for direct service workers in Cambridge and will occur on February 12, 2025, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The training will be hosted as part of the Community Engagement Team's ("CET") "Networking Events", which attracts 70-100 providers per session, with a focus on critical issues impacting Cambridge's immigrant communities. This training will be virtual, supported by CET's extensive mailing list of interested providers.

More trainings will be provided to account for any changes put forth by the new administration. CIRC remains committed to providing residents, employees, and visitors with the most up-to-date resources available. CIRC is also compiling resource materials for distribution, including information on legal assistance, support services, and reporting mechanisms for discrimination based on protected classes, such as national origin and race.

A letter to community organizations that work with the immigrant population is attached.

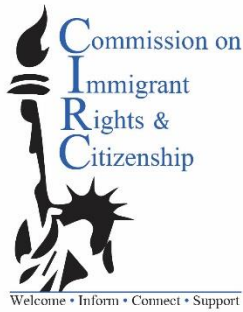
Very truly yours,



Carolina Almonte
Executive Director



Megan Bayer
City Solicitor



Carolina Almonte, Esq.
Executive Director

51 Inman Street, 2nd Floor.
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617-349-4396

January 23, 2025

Re: Letter to Community Organizations Serving Immigrant Populations in Cambridge

The Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship (“CIRC”), on behalf of the City Council, City Manager’s Office, and City departments, is writing to reaffirm the City of Cambridge’s unwavering commitment to supporting and protecting our immigrant communities. Cambridge has long been a leader in advocating for the rights of immigrants, dating back to 1985, when the City declared itself a “Sanctuary City.”

In 2020, the City Council further strengthened these protections by enacting the Welcoming Community Ordinance, Chapter 2.129 et. seq. of the Cambridge Municipal Code, which provides that the City of Cambridge will “treat all persons equally, enforce laws, and serve the public without consideration of immigration status.” The Ordinance further provides that City employees and Officials may not inquire about the immigration status of any victim, suspect, arrestee, 911 caller or other member of the public, except as otherwise required by law. The Ordinance also restricts collaboration with federal immigration authorities, and provides essential safeguards for residents and visitors, including students and workers.

CIRC, established in 2016 by the Cambridge City Council, remains committed to providing accessible services, language support and legal resources, through a partnership with De Novo Center for Justice and Healing. Community members may continue to access City services without fear as we move forward into the next administration.

CIRC, in coordination with other City departments, organizes trainings and fosters partnerships with community organizations to address the unique needs of our immigrant populations. Most recently, we have prioritized hosting Know Your Rights (“KYR”) trainings that are offered by experienced immigration attorneys from established immigrant rights organizations to empower residents with knowledge of their legal rights, changes in immigration law, and information about access to legal assistance. These trainings include the distribution of informational materials such as “Red Cards” in the seven predominant languages spoken in Cambridge.

Officers from the Cambridge Police Department (“CPD”) often join KYR’s trainings to educate the Cambridge residents. A fundamental principle of CPD is ensuring that all community

members feel comfortable seeking police assistance and protection, regardless of their immigration or documentation status. The enforcement of federal civil immigration laws is the responsibility of the federal government. As such, the Cambridge Police Department does not conduct immigration-related investigations and does not routinely inquire about the immigration status of individuals during regular police operations.

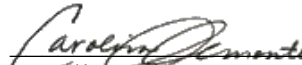
The City continues its work to support language justice, which is the right to understand and be understood in the language in which a person is most comfortable. The Language Justice Division can provide interpretation for any City events. To request an interpreter, please contact the City: AccessHelp@CambridgeMA.gov.

We invite your organization to assist us in sharing these resources and amplifying the reach of these efforts. We remain committed to ensuring that our immigrant communities feel safe, welcomed, and supported.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact CIRC at circ@cambridgema.gov or (617) 349-4396.

Thank you for your dedication to this important work.

Very truly yours,



Carolina Almonte, Executive Director
Commission in Immigrant Rights and Citizenship