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**CONTACT**

Alex Boskovich

Chief of Staff to Supervisor Elisa Márquez

(510) 271-5136 [call line only]

[alex.boskovich@acgov.org](mailto:alex.boskovich@acgov.org)

**Alameda County Advances Plans for Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs**

*Bay Area philanthropy invests \$185,000 for independent implementation study to coordinate and strengthen County's infrastructure to better serve and protect immigrant and refugee residents from federal budget and policy attacks.*

OAKLAND, Calif. — Alameda County announced a major step forward in its commitment to better serving its large and diverse immigrant and refugee communities. On March 17, 2026, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors approved a Memorandum of Understanding between the County, the San Francisco Foundation, and the Zellerbach Family Foundation to support an independent implementation study exploring the establishment of a new Alameda County Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs. [Implementation study findings and recommendations are scheduled to be presented at the Alameda County Together For All \(ACT\) Ad Hoc Committee this Thursday, April 30 at 3PM; the meeting is open to in-person and remote participation.](#)

"Establishing this office is not a symbol; it is the infrastructure we urgently need to ensure our county government shows up for immigrants and refugee residents with the coordination, resources, and respect that they deserve. I am grateful for all the study partners who share our commitment to immigrant and refugee families that belong in Alameda County and contribute immensely to the East Bay and beyond," said [ACT Ad Hoc Committee Vice Chair Supervisor Elisa Márquez](#) who led philanthropic engagement efforts to launch the implementation study. Supervisor Márquez, a daughter of Mexican immigrants, represents District 2 which has the most residents born outside the US (45.9%) of the five county supervisorial districts according to recent data from the Alameda County Public Health Department.

Alameda County is home to one of California's most diverse populations, with one in three residents born outside the United States and more than 120 languages spoken across the

county. Recent changes in federal immigration policy have heightened the urgency for a more coordinated, dedicated county response to the needs of immigrant and refugee families.

“Over the past year, Alameda County has stepped up to protect the rights of our immigrant and refugee communities with over \$7 million in investments for critical rapid response, legal defense services, and community education. It’s time to institutionalize our commitment by establishing an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs that will create a stronger, more coordinated system that ensures every resident can access services, feel safe, and thrive,” said Supervisor Nikki Fortunato Bas, a daughter of Filipino immigrants who represents District 5 and chairs the Alameda County Together for All Ad Hoc Committee charged with protecting our most vulnerable residents from the impacts of the current federal administration.

The implementation study builds on years of commitment, including the foundational research commissioned by the late Alameda County Supervisors Richard Valle and Wilma Chan, whose leadership helped to lay the groundwork for this effort. Their Ad Hoc Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights’ [final report in 2021](#) proposed 10 recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, including establishing an Alameda County Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs. The ACT Ad Hoc Committee received the same recommendation at its August 14, 2025 meeting. This prompted Supervisor Márquez to engage the Zellerbach Family Foundation to help with coordinating local philanthropy to fund an independent implementation study that would inform and guide the Board of Supervisors during its current budget process.

In total, \$185,000 was raised including from the Zellerbach Family Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, Akonadi Foundation, and East Bay Community Foundation to provide Alameda County with an independent implementation study to chart the development and ongoing maintenance of an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs.

"The Zellerbach Family Foundation (ZFF) is proud to be a part of this truly collaborative effort. Under the leadership of Supervisor Márquez and Supervisor Fortunato Bas, Alameda County is poised to protect critical supports for its immigrant communities. This work exemplifies the importance of public private partnerships and philanthropy's role in ensuring a responsive and sustained public infrastructure for immigrant and refugee residents," said Allison L. Magee, President and Executive Director for the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

Study co-authors, Be The Change Consulting and LikeWater Consulting Group, assessed existing countywide services and comparable models from other jurisdictions across California and in other states. They worked in close partnership with a nine-member community advisory body recommended by the Board of Supervisors to ensure representation across their five districts, including from key rapid response organizations from the Alameda County Immigration Legal Education Partnership (ACILEP), Alameda County Collaborative for Removal Defense (ACCORD), Alameda County United in Defense of Immigrant Rights, and API Legal Outreach (APILO). Their presentation for Thursday’s ACT Ad Hoc Committee cites “[t]he honest framing is not 'what is wrong with Alameda County' - it is what would it look like to connect what already exists, resource it adequately, and hold it accountable to the communities it serves.”

[In 2025, the ACT Ad Hoc Committee recommended and received approval from the Board to invest a total for \\$7+ million to strengthen services for immigrant and refugee families facing attacks from the current federal administration](#), including funding for the Public Defender's Immigration Unit as well as the County's rapid response hotline, legal defense and wraparound support services, and community education programs. The Board of Supervisors also approved [\\$450,000 from the Measure W Essential Services Fund on October 28, 2025 to support staffing within the Alameda County Social Services Agency](#) for interim coordination of immigrant and refugee services.

"The Social Services Agency is proud to support this effort. We see every day the strength and resilience of immigrant and refugee families in Alameda County, and we know that a more coordinated county approach will help us serve them more equitably and effectively. Community engagement will be at the heart of this process," Andrea Ford, Alameda County Social Services Agency Director. The Social Services Agency brought forth and received approval for the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with the Zellerbach Family Foundation and San Francisco Foundation for the independent implementation study last month.

**The April 30<sup>th</sup> ACT Ad Hoc Committee agenda and presentation materials are available at <https://bos.alamedacountyca.gov/broadcast/>.** For more information, visit: <https://socialservices.alamedacountyca.gov/ex/about-us/Government-and-Community-Relations/programs-and-initiatives/immigrant-relations>.

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### **About Alameda County Supervisor Elisa Márquez**

A lifelong, locally educated resident of District 2, Alameda County Supervisor Elisa Márquez proudly represents the vibrant communities of Hayward, Newark, and Union City, as well as parts of Fremont. Throughout her two decades of public service, Supervisor Márquez has championed the creation of safer, more sustainable communities with affordable homes, reducing the number of our residents experiencing homelessness, and ensuring a safety-net for all, including keeping St. Rose Hospital open. She serves as the Chair of Alameda County's Public Protection Committee and Vice Chair of the Together For All, or "ACT" Ad Hoc Committee to ensure the County is prepared to protect and support residents from harmful federal policies and budgetary actions, including attacks on immigrant and refugee families. Learn more at: [district2.acgov.org](https://district2.acgov.org).

### **About Alameda County Supervisor Nikki Fortunato Bas**

Supervisor Nikki Fortunato Bas represents the Fifth District of Alameda County, which includes the cities of Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Piedmont, and portions of Oakland. She champions community-centered policies and budgeting, and chairs the [Alameda County Together for All Ad Hoc Committee](#) focused on protecting our most vulnerable communities and safety net services from budget and policy impacts of the federal administration. She previously served as the President of the Oakland City Council and as a nonprofit executive. Learn more at: [district5.acgov.org](https://district5.acgov.org).

### **About the Zellerbach Family Foundation**

For over 65 years, the Zellerbach Family Foundation (ZFF) has been dedicated to serving as a catalyst for constructive social change by initiating and investing in efforts that strengthen families and communities. ZFF works with grantees and other partners to promote belonging, connection, and a shared sense of safety among people and communities across the Bay Area and California.

### **About the San Francisco Foundation**

Founded in 1948, the San Francisco Foundation is one of the nation's largest community foundations, dedicated to improving life across the Bay Area. The foundation mobilizes resources and drives change to strengthen communities, support civic leadership, and advance philanthropy in the region. In partnership with community leaders, nonprofits, and donors, the San Francisco Foundation works to advance racial equity and economic inclusion so that everyone in the Bay Area can access good jobs, safe and affordable housing, and a strong political voice.

### **About Akonadi Foundation**

Akonadi Foundation is committed to building a racially just Oakland — a place fostering the liberation and well-being of all young people and their families - through supporting the development of powerful social change movements to eliminate structural racism. Over the last 25 years, the Foundation has given over \$61 million to nonprofit organizations, primarily in Oakland, that have centered power-building and organizing to fuel a racial justice movement. For more information, visit <https://akonadi.org/>.

### **About East Bay Community Foundation**

East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF) envisions an East Bay where everyone has the economic freedom to dream, heal, and belong. EBCF partners with donors, community organizations, foundations, government, and corporations to eliminate barriers, advance equity, and transform our community for all who call the East Bay home. In 2024, EBCF's Campaign for a Just East Bay strategically invested \$4.2 million in East Bay community organizations, and their community of fund advisors awarded grants totaling \$108 million – 62% of which supported work happening in the Bay Area. Learn more about EBCF's impact in the community at [www.ebcf.org](http://www.ebcf.org).

### **About the Alameda County Social Services Agency**

For over 50 years, the Alameda County Social Services Agency (ACSSA) has served the residents across Alameda County, providing both a safety net and a way forward. ACSSA provides support in life's hardest moments, helping individuals, families, and communities meet basic needs, navigate crises, and build towards a stronger future. Guided by core values of dignity, compassion, integrity, shared purpose, and accountability, ACSSA delivers comprehensive support through Adult & Aging Services, Children & Family Services, and Workforce & Benefits. For more information, visit [alamedacountysocialservices.gov](http://alamedacountysocialservices.gov) or call 211.

### **About Be the Change Consulting**

Founded in 2012, Be the Change Consulting (BTC) is an immigrant- and woman-owned, people-of-color-led organizational development firm based in Oakland. BTC brings more than a decade of experience designing equity-centered systems and facilitating community-rooted planning processes in moments of both possibility and crisis. Our team specializes in translating complex policy environments into participatory, human-centered solutions. BTC has deep experience working alongside public agencies, elected officials, coalitions, and directly impacted residents to design structures that are culturally responsive, durable, and aligned with community values.

### **About LikeWater Consulting Group**

LikeWater Consulting Group LLC, brings over 15 years of experience leading complex philanthropic initiatives, multi-million-dollar investments, and systems-level change strategies that advance racial, social, and economic justice across California and nationally. Grounded in partnership and execution, LikeWater guides organizations through transformative shifts in strategy, governance, grantmaking, and learning systems. LikeWater provides tailored support to philanthropic institutions and government leaders defending democracy, donor collaboratives aligning to block and build, and movement intermediaries. Their services include aligning strategy, operations, and learning with values driven goals; designing and facilitating adaptive strategic planning processes that build shared vision and accountability; and coaching executives, directors, and leadership teams to grow impact, manage risk, and strengthen adaptability. LikeWater also supports change management and culture shifts aligned, designs impact tracking and learning systems that center community-defined outcomes, and guides board and executive teams in developing long-term investment strategies.