



Indivisible: Central Maryland

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SUPPORT HB 015

**Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs - Established
Hearing of the House Appropriations Committee – January 27, 2021**

Indivisible Central Maryland is a grassroots organization of constituents of Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County and Prince George's County who are dedicated to protecting progressive and democratic values. **Indivisible Central Maryland strongly supports HB 015**, which would establish a Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

Members of Indivisible Central Maryland volunteer with Asylum Helpers, an all-volunteer group of Marylanders who help newly-arrived asylee families. Services include gathering clothing and household goods for the families, collecting food or monetary donations for food, taking families shopping, or shopping for them. Once the families are settled, however, their needs change. The children needs vaccinations. Adults and children frequently need emergency dental care after years of dental neglect. An immigration attorney may order the adults to learn English.

Especially during the pandemic, families may need help interacting with their child's school, or applying for benefits for which they qualify. They need to be coached how to access the library, post office, and other public facilities. Asylum Helpers has stepped in to assist with many of these tasks. Some of it is straightforward, but finding resources such as ESOL classes, medical and dental care, and helping the families with school concerns or benefits requires a lot of calling and research. Each county has different offices and resources. The asylee's native language may not be spoken. And what happens to families who don't have a helper who can navigate the Maryland system?

For both asylee families and anyone assisting them, having a centralized office for referrals and a hotline for specific assistance would allow families to seek and access services in an efficient manner. A neighborhood resource center would allow families to receive information specific to their locale, and give them self-efficacy to access needed services themselves. We support the idea of building bridges from new immigrants to their communities through interacting with the proposed office. The more new families are able to participate in their wider community, the faster they will become contributing members as they find their areas of interest and service. Last, we support the job-search resources proposed in the bill. As our families are able to work and achieve self-sufficiency, they are able to give back to their communities. For all these

reasons, Indivisible Central Maryland strongly **SUPPORTS HB 015**. With questions, please call Liz Enagonio at 301-351-6451.

Liz Enagonio, advocate, on behalf of Indivisible Central Maryland
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