



KCIRC |

KING COUNTY IMMIGRANT
AND REFUGEE COMMISSION

COMMISSION

KCIRC

2024 Annual Report

PREPARED BY:

KCIRC Staff, Commissioners and
Commission Leadership



King County

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OUR MISSION

02 Our Mission



The Commission will focus on understanding and addressing challenges facing immigrants and refugees within the diverse communities that make up King County. The Commission will work as a hub and central connecting place for building direct relationships with and supporting the vision for social justice for immigrant and refugee communities in King County. The Commission will enhance the integration of refugees and immigrants culturally, economically, and civically, in order to strengthen the communities where they live and will support refugees and immigrants to thrive and succeed while maintaining their own identities.

"The focus of KCIRC is to connect with and hear from members of the immigrant and refugee communities who are impacted by the issues." - KCIRC Guiding Principles

OUR VISION

03 Our Vision



Our vision is for King County to be a place where everyone has equitable access to opportunities. To achieve this vision, the King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission (KCIRC) plays a significant role in engaging immigrant and refugee communities to establish long-lasting trust-based relationships with County offices and programs. KCIRC shall strive to leverage existing programs and funding, and advocate for increased, dedicated resources necessary for immigrant refugee communities to thrive.

"KCIRC commits to using equity, racial justice, and social justice as a framework in all of our work, our relationships, our processes, and our model." - KCIRC Guiding Principles

04 2024 Commission Profile

Member

- Carlos Michel
- Claire Sumadiwirya
- Kia McGlone*
- Maha Roy
- Mario Bañuelos
- Meron Girma
- Mohamed Bakr
- Praveena Thammireddy
- Sercan Hepsener
- Sergio Razo*
- Wahid Bihroz
- Zahra Mohamed*

District

- District 9
- District 6
- District 7
- District 1
- District 2
- District 4
- District 6
- District 4
- District 7
- District 3
- District 7
- District 8

*2024 Officers

Staffers

- Daud Ali
- Omar Hassan
- Cheryse Ishii
- Tera Chea
- Dae Shogren

Agency

- Executive's Office
- Executive's Office
- Executive's Office
- King County Council
- King County Council

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

05 2024 Accomplishments

- **2024 Meetings:** The Commission held ten meetings and a retreat in May 2024.
- **Harborview Bond Program:** Melvin Givens returned to provide an update on previous feedback the Commission gave on the bond program.
- **Input on Data Collection Ordinance:** Staff from Council District 1 presented on an existing data collection ordinance and solicited feedback from the commissioners to draft and incorporate ideas. Specifically, around data collection methodology that does not compromise data on immigration status of King County residents.
- **Letter to King County Council re: Riverton Park Church Umc:** In January, the Commission continued dialogue with the King County Executive's Office regarding the dire situation of asylum seekers at Riverton Park Church in Tukwila. Michael Padilla from the Executive's Office joined a meeting to provide updates.

The Commission sent a letter to the Council in February in support of King County providing aid to the asylum seekers. Through these efforts, the Commission was able to dialogue directly with Council and received responses from members. These and other efforts resulted in a \$25 million allocation from Washington State to assist families and children with emergency shelter and housing.

- **Office of Equity and Racial and Social Justice Strategic Plan External Engagement:** At the March meeting, the Commission engaged with County staff member Phyllis Sutton and others from OERSJ to review the upcoming strategic plan refresh and discuss strategies to enhance services in King County, specifically in Housing, Economic Development, and Education.
- **2024 Commissioners Retreat:** The 2024 retreat was held on May 25, 2024. Retreat priorities included solidifying the 2024 KCIRC Annual Work Plan, as well as discussing the over-arching retreat goal - *Advocate for the improvement of language access and culturally relevant programs and services for King County's Immigrant & Refugee Communities.*

Commissioners worked with consultant Alma Villegas of AV Consulting to identify priority issues in the areas of education, housing, and economic development. They planned actions to support pathways to increase community advocacy.

- **KCIRC Election of Officers:** Officers were elected to Co-Chair and Secretary positions in 2024, as per by-laws.

STATEMENTS

06

2024

Statements

Letter of Support for Asylum Seekers at Riverton Park Church Umc

Dear Esteemed Members of the King County Council,

We trust this letter finds you in good health and spirits. We, the King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission, are reaching out to express our heartfelt concern for the homeless asylum seekers currently seeking refuge at Riverton Park Church UNC in Tukwila, WA.

In the spirit of unity and compassion, we believe that it is within our collective responsibility to address the needs of those who have sought safety and asylum within our community. The individuals currently residing in tents outside of Riverton Park Church UNC are in a vulnerable position, and we are eager to work together to ensure their well-being and integration into our community.

We kindly urge the King County Council to prioritize and support initiatives that provide essential resources for these asylum seekers. By addressing their immediate needs, we not only uphold our commitment to humanitarian values but also contribute to the overall strength and show what resilience for our diverse community looks like.

We acknowledge the challenges posed by the current situation but also believe with intentionality and swift action to assist these families we can prevent further trauma and harm to everyone witnessing this crisis as well. We also believe even though it is the City of Tukwila that is currently carrying this massive weight, it can happen to any city at any time and there will be no warning.

As members of the King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission, we are committed to working collaboratively with the Council to ensure that our community remains inclusive and supportive of all its residents. By coming together and addressing the needs of our vulnerable population, we can make King County a shining example of compassion, empathy, unity and action-oriented.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this pressing matter. We look forward to your leadership and support in making a positive impact on the lives of those seeking asylum in our community.

Wishing you continued success in your dedicated service to King County.

Sincerely,

King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission



King County

Metropolitan King County Council

King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue, Suite 1200
Seattle, WA 98104-3272
Tel: 206-477-1000
www.kingcounty.gov/council

Dear Representatives Ormsby, Bergquist, Gregerson, Macri, and Senators Robinson, Nguyen, and Hasegawa;

We are writing in strong support of the proposed \$25 million investment for immigrant services in the FY25 operating budget.

Throughout the state, we are already seeing the repercussions of the dearth of services for recently arrived asylum seekers. Families and individuals who have traveled across the world in search of safety are being greeted with a lack of access to basic needs and a fractured social safety net. They are in legal limbo: while they wait for the months-long federal asylum process to grant eligibility for work permits and other necessary resources, they don't have the ability to gain employment or access otherwise available services. The result is that current federal policy prevents them from supporting themselves, even as the federal government fails to provide support to state or local governments or nonprofit partners to support this population.

Washington state has a long and distinct history of welcoming people who have been driven from their homes due to violence and conflict. This budget investment would make strides towards addressing the current reality for the hundreds of individuals and families arriving statewide. By supporting essential needs like housing, food, transportation, education, legal, and employment services, we can provide our newest Washingtonians – many of whom are only children – with the tools they need to settle in and thrive in their new lives.

We know you are faced with challenging and immense decisions this legislative session. However, we urge you to prioritize this investment, which so clearly exemplifies the values of equity, inclusion, and opportunity that we as Washingtonians hold so deeply.

Sincerely,

Councilmember Jorge L. Barón
District 4

Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda
District 8

Council Chair Dave Upthegrove
District 5

Councilmember Girmay Zahilay
District 2

LOOKING

07 Looking Forward

For 2025, the KCIRC commits to:

- Updating and strengthening the Commission Bylaws, which have not been formally updated since 2019.
- Updating and revising the Commission Onboarding Handbook and Materials, to support incoming commissioners during their onboarding period.
- Supporting the work of the Office of Equity and Racial and Social Justice on accountability and compliance for county departments as it relates to upholding King County Code 2.15: Immigrant, Refugee and Language Access Ordinance.
- Increasing broad community engagement through online presence such as social media and at immigrant and refugee community events. Updating communities on the work of the commission while strengthening relationships with community members.
- Collaborating closely with King County Council by providing guidance and insight on issues impacting immigrant and refugee communities. Presenting the annual briefing to King County Council Committee of the Whole.



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Join the Commission!

KING COUNTY IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE COMMISSION

BECOME A COMMISSIONER

We are seeking residents interested in serving on the King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission (KCIRC). KCIRC serves all King County residents and acts as an advisory body to the executive and legislative branches of King County government. Commissioners serve on a volunteer basis and work together to identify, elevate, and develop shared strategies and solutions to address the most pressing issues affecting immigrant and refugee communities.

Questions? Email us at kcirc@kingcounty.gov.

APPLY NOW!