



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** **Rebecca Boydston, Council Assistant, on behalf of Council Member Keith Blocker, City Manager’s Office**  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution in Support of Human Rights and Reunification of the Families Who Were Separated When Crossing the U.S. Mexico Border –December 18, 2018  
**DATE:** December 7, 2018

---

**SUMMARY:**

A resolution affirming the City of Tacoma’s support for the human rights of all persons, including immigrants and refugees, who live, work, travel through, or seek services within its boundaries and reunification of the families who were separated when crossing the U.S. Mexico Border.

**COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Mayor Woodards and Council Members Blocker and McCarthy

**STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:**

This resolution best aligns with the City Council’s strategic policy priorities to:

- Strengthen and support a safe city with healthy residents.
- Ensure all Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.
- Cultivate a vibrant cultural sector that fosters a creative, cohesive community.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 1967, the City established the Tacoma Human Rights Commission, through Ordinance No. 18301, whose mission is to study and investigate problems of prejudice, racism, bigotry, and discrimination, and to encourage and coordinate the implementation of programs consistent with the needs and the rights of all residents of the City of Tacoma.

In 2014, through Resolution No. 39019, the City passed the Equity and Empowerment Initiative to support, among several goals, human rights and opportunities for all persons within the City to achieve their full potential, including immigrants and refugees who live, work, travel through, or seek services within the City. In 2015, through Resolution No. 39116, the City passed the Welcoming Cities and Counties Initiative, which encourages communities to create more welcoming, immigrant-friendly environments that maximize opportunities for economic growth and cultural vitality to make the City a more vibrant, inclusive, and welcoming place for all people regardless of immigration status.

In 2017, through Resolution No. 36942, the City convened a task force of immigrants and refugees and their advocates to further the City’s vision as an inclusive and equitable community. In addition in 2017, through Resolution No. 39892 and upon the recommendation of the Immigrant and Refugee Task Force, the City established a Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to work with community partners, City departments, and within the City’s Equity and Empowerment framework to identify and advance positive outcomes for members of the City’s refugee and immigrant communities to enhance their access to and participation in Tacoma’s economic, cultural, and civic life.

The City recognizes that the United States was implementing a “zero tolerance” immigration policy that directly conflicted with the City of Tacoma’s Welcoming Cities and Counties Initiative, resulting in (1) separating minor children, including infants and toddlers, from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border,



including those fleeing threats of violence or death in their countries of origin, mainly the Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, who have entered or attempted to enter the United States legally as asylum seekers, which is permitted by federal law; (2) incarcerating parents on the misdemeanor charge of alleged illegal entry into the United States so that their minor children were separated from them, including asylum-seeking and other parents detained at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, rather than releasing such families from custody so that they can remain together during pending misdemeanor and/or immigration proceedings, which practice the United States followed prior to implementing the zero-tolerance policy; (3) failing to address in such Executive Order reuniting separated children with their parents; (4) failing to track the location of many of the separated children, so that their safety can be assured and they can be reunited with their parents; (5) deporting parents in expedited removal proceedings, including those seeking asylum, without their children and often without information regarding the location of such children; (6) deporting parents in “voluntary” departure proceedings, including those with asylum claims, after they are pressured to agree to voluntary departure as the best way to be reunited with their separated children; and (7) diverting limited federal resources to prosecute thousands of asylum seekers and others for misdemeanor border-crossing, instead of using such resources to investigate and prosecute far more serious criminal activities.

The Human Rights Commission discussed a request for resolution at their June 21, 2018 meeting. The City’s Human Rights Commission, consistent with its long-standing commitment to human rights and in support of the humane and equitable treatment of all persons within its boundaries and throughout the country, joins the state of Washington, the United States Commission on Civil Rights, and other public and private organizations and officials in calling for the reunification of the families of separated children and parents; the release from federal custody of all parents, children, and families, pending their misdemeanor and/or immigration proceedings, including all parents held at the Northwest Detention Center; and the following of an asylum law for all those crossing the border and seeking asylum. The Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs supported the resolution request at their September 24, 2018 meeting.

**ISSUE:**

The City wishes to affirm its support for the human rights of all persons, including immigrants and refugees who live, work, travel through, or seek services within its boundaries,

**ALTERNATIVES:**

The City Council could adopt, modify or reject the resolution.

**RECOMMENDATION**

At the request of the Human Rights Commission and the support of the Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, we are recommending adoption of a resolution that supports and affirms the human rights of all persons including immigrants and refugees who live, work, travel through, or seek services within its boundaries and reunification of the families who were separated when crossing the U.S. Mexico Border.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact from this legislation.