



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Council Member Olgy Diaz and Senior Council Policy Analyst Lynda Foster
COPY: Mayor and City Council, City Clerk
SUBJECT: **Resolution – Contingency Fund Request to support access to phone services for detainees in the Northwest ICE Processing Center – March 5, 2024**
DATE: February 21, 2024

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution authorizing an expenditure of \$10,000 from the Council Contingency Fund to Advocates for Immigrants in Detention Northwest (AIDNW) for their Phone Call Fund to support access to phone services for detainees in the Northwest ICE Processing Center.
[Council Member Olgy Diaz]

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Woodards and Council Members Bushnell, Diaz, and Walker

BACKGROUND:

The Council Member’s Recommendation is Based On:

This request is for \$10,000 to Advocates for Immigrants in Detention Northwest (AIDNW) for their Phone Call Fund to support access to phone services for detainees in the Northwest ICE Processing Center (NWIPC). The NWIPC requires detainees to utilize a private, for-profit phone service to place phone calls. These allocated funds would be used by AIDNW to distribute phone money to up to 105 low-income detainees per month. Funding is to be provided in \$20 per month increments. Funds received can be used by detainees to call friends, family, and legal advocates.

Communication with the outside world is crucial for incarcerated people. This includes individuals facing deportation while detained in immigration detention centers, who do not have the right to court-appointed counsel. Having the ability to make a phone call in a detention center is essential for a variety of reasons. Individuals need to secure legal representation or advice, gather evidence to support their defenses against deportation, and receive needed emotional support from family and friends. Detained immigrants with legal representation are 10 times more likely to win their immigration cases compared to those who lack counsel, and are seven times more likely to be released from custody than those without counsel. However, phone calls within the detention center are not free. The cost of phone calls exceeds 50 cents per minute for individuals in detention. In some cases, detainees can contact Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) for free, but not all detainees have NWIRP lawyers. Low-income individuals detained in the NWIPC risk being unable to afford to pay for phone access and face reduced access to legal support and poor mental and emotional health impacts from isolation.

AIDNW is a non-profit organization that serves immigrants detained in the Pacific Northwest through assistance, advocacy, and increased awareness. Through hands-on immigrant assistance programs, AIDNW’s small staff and over 200 volunteers address the needs of detained persons held inside the NWIPC, and upon release.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

AIDNW contacted the Mayor and Council to request support for their programming to support immigrants in detention at the NWIPC. Providing funds for phone access to NWIPC detainees aligns with requests from the Commission for Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (CIRA) and community advocates. CM Diaz informed CIRA of this contingency fund request and will attend their February 2024 meeting to request feedback. City Council Members, including Council Member Catherine Ushka and Council Member Kristina Walker, have been meeting with community advocates about the NWIPC for more than three years. Advocates have shared important information regarding the challenges detainees can face and their limited access to resources, including phones. Detainees need access to phones to be able to communicate with lawyers, friends, and family



about their legal cases and receive updates about their status. In addition, effective oversight and timely interventions to protect the health and well-being of the detainees when needed depend on their ability to share information with advocates outside the facility. This proposal was also shared with the Khmer Advocacy and Advancement Group (KhAAG), who expressed support for the policy.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

Approximately 7% of the US population, or 22.8 million people, are non-citizens. In 2017, nearly 260,000 people sought asylum, or protection from persecution, within the United States. These immigrant populations experience unique risks to health, including pre-migratory trauma, unsafe and stressful migration experiences, and post-migration discrimination. Human rights abuses can occur across this spectrum of the immigrant experience. Once in the United States, immigrants may experience fears of deportation or mistrust of health services, dissuading care-seeking behavior. Health outcomes associated with increased immigration enforcement and fear of deportation include increased cardiovascular risk factors, lower birth weights, and worsened mental health. In addition, these health behaviors and outcomes ripple throughout the communities to which immigrants belong. Twenty million children living in the United States have at least one immigrant parent, and more than 16.7 million people have at least one undocumented family member living with them, among whom nearly 50% are US born or naturalized citizens. This already vulnerable population faces additional challenges if individuals find themselves in immigrant detention. According to the World Health Organization, immigration detention is harmful to health.

Livability: Equity Index Score: Very Low Opportunity

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and CHIP, for all Tacoma residents

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).

Expanding phone access to the vulnerable population detained at the NWIPC will assist detainees in seeking and receiving legal counsel, and will also provide resources for detained individuals to maintain connections to individuals outside of the detention facility. Being able to connect with friends and family will allow detainees to coordinate logistics for their time in detention and release, as well as maintain critical connections that is essential for mental health.

ALTERNATIVES:

Presumably, your recommendation is not the only potential course of action; please discuss other alternatives or actions that City Council or staff could take. Please use table below.

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Refer AIDNW to the standard funding cycles offered by the City.	Reviews this funding request against other applications.	AIDNW approached the Mayor and Council outside of a funding cycle, waiting would not address the immediate need.
2. Fund at a higher level	Addresses more than \$10,000 in need, AIDNW provides \$2,300 a month to detainees.	Reduces funding for other Council priorities.



EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

AIDNW shall be provided information on how to apply to standard funding opportunities at the City of Tacoma.

SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

The sponsor recommends approving this contingency fund request to provide \$10,000 to Advocates for Immigrants in Detention Northwest (AIDNW) for their Phone Call Fund to support access to phone services for detainees in the Northwest ICE Processing Center.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1.1030- Council Contingency Fund	660000		\$10,000
2.			
TOTAL			

What Funding is being used to support the expense?

Council Contingency Funds.

Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?

The Council Contingency Fund provides an established amount of funding each year for unbudgeted Council sponsored initiatives.

Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?

No

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

No

Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?

No

ATTACHMENTS:

- 2022-2023 council Contingency Commitments