



105 Chauncy St. #901  
Boston, MA 02111  
[www.miracoalition.org](http://www.miracoalition.org)  
Voice: 617.350.5480  
Fax: 617.350.5499

June 1, 2009

Honorable Senate President Therese Murray  
Office of the Senate President, MA State House

Honorable Speaker of the House Robert A. DeLeo  
Office of the Speaker of the House, MA State House

Honorable Chairman Steven C. Panagiotakos  
Senate Committee on Ways & Means, MA State House

Honorable Chairman Charles A. Murphy  
House Committee on Ways & Means, MA State House

Honorable Vice-Chairman Stephen M. Brewer  
Senate Committee on Ways & Means, MA State House

Honorable Vice-Chairwoman Barbara A. L'Italien  
House Committee on Ways & Means, MA State House

Honorable Senator Michael Knapik  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Ways & Means, MA State House

Honorable Representative Viriato M. deMacedo  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Ways & Means, MA State House

CC: Senate Ways & Means Staff; House Ways & Means Staff

FR: Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition

Honorable Senate President Murray, Speaker DeLeo, and Members of the Conference Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) to request your support during the upcoming Conference Committee. Thank you for your hard work in pursuit of policies that have a positive social and economic impact on the immigrant community of Massachusetts, a community that represents 14% of the Commonwealth's population and 17% of its total workforce. We urge you to make issues that affect the health, well-being and education of these residents a priority.

We respectfully request your support during the Conference Committee on our budgetary priorities, which include:

1. **Restoring Commonwealth Care eligibility for 28,000 legal immigrants, who would lose coverage if Outside Section 77 of the Senate budget is included in the final budget.** The cut to Commonwealth Care eligibility for these 28,000 legal, working, tax-paying residents represents the first step backwards in coverage since the passage of Health Reform and runs contrary to the legislation's values and goal of universal coverage. Among the 28,000 legal immigrants are new legal permanent residents (green card holders), asylum applicants, and others who are residing under color of law.
2. **Funding Citizenship Services for New Americans (Line item 4003-0122) at the \$500,000 included in the House version of the budget.** Citizenship services currently funds 15 programs across the state to provide a range of services for low-income immigrants during the naturalization process. The program is very cost-effective and may save the Commonwealth money over the course of the year, as it helps some elderly and disabled immigrants who are currently receiving state-funded Emergency Aid to Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC) naturalize and become eligible for federally-funded SSI.
3. **Funding domestic violence and sexual assault services (line item 4513-1130), including the Refugee and Immigrant Safety and Empowerment Program (RISE), at the \$5,108,264 appropriated in the House budget with the Senate version of the line item's language.** The line item funds five different programs to provide domestic violence and sexual assaults services to survivors of violence. RISE helps to stem the cycle of violence by supporting 22 organizations that provide immigrant and refugee domestic violence and sexual assault victims with linguistically- and culturally-competent services.
4. **Including Senate Outside Section 73, which directs the MA Health and Educational Facilities Authority (HEFA) and the Connector to continue their contributions to the MassHealth Outreach Grant Program, currently at \$2.5 million in FY09.** These health reform outreach grants go to over 50 non-profit community organizations across the state and are critical to continuity of coverage and health reform's continued success, including in hard-to-reach immigrant and limited English proficient communities.
5. **Including the Senate language for a cost-benefit study on immigrant access to benefits and enhanced enforcement activities (Senate Amendment 151.1), but conducted by the Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants (ORI), as designated by a similar study adopted in the House (Further Amendment to House Amendment #287).** Adopting the Senate language of the study will ensure that a cost-benefit analysis takes place on *both* access to benefits and enhanced immigration enforcement activities, which will address the issues raised by the amendments in both the House and Senate. Moreover, ORI is uniquely positioned to conduct the study because of its previous work on similar issues; connection to key stakeholders; and institutional knowledge on topics related immigrants, immigration, and enforcement activities.
6. **Funding the Workforce Training Fund (WTF) at \$21 million included in the House version of the budget.** The WTF is funded exclusively through employer contributions (a surcharge on Unemployment Insurance) and, as such, does not impact the General Fund. MIRA is advocating for full funding of the WTF to facilitate the implementation of a Dedicate Fund for Workplace ABE/ESOL.

Your support for the above programs and policies is crucial to the future health and prosperity of the Commonwealth. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Eva A. Millona  
Executive Director  
MIRA Coalition