

Dane Co. Exec. Parisi: Announces plan to help residents gain citizenship and better attain services

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Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced a plan to help Dane County residents gain United States citizenship and better attain services. The plan rolled out today at a press conference will create a brand new Immigration Assistance Fund which will help more Dane County residents apply for citizenship. Parisi also announced the creation of a new position, Immigrant Affairs Specialist, in the Dane County Tamara Grigsby Office for Equity and Inclusion which will work with immigrant communities to support immigrant integration through coordination of county services.

“Thousands of immigrants in Dane County are eligible for citizenship but lack the resources to navigate the process,” said County Executive Joe Parisi. “This plan will help direct and connect residents to resources that will enable them to succeed and give them a fair shot at realizing the American Dream.”

Since the election of President Trump, community organizations have received a significant increase in requests for legal assistance to receive citizenship and have reached out to the county for assistance. The Immigration Assistance Fund will be administered by an organization that wins a competitive process and will start off with \$75,000 from the County. The County is also asking that organization to raise additional private funds to assist more residents work through the legal path to citizenship.

The new Immigrant Affairs Specialist for Dane County will be a bilingual Spanish

speaker. The position will provide outreach to organizations that support immigrant communities on how to navigate county services, including but not limited to those services provided through the Department of Human Services, Dane County UW-Extension and Public Health Madison and Dane County. The position will work to improve accessibility of county services to immigrant communities and refer residents to outside agencies and organizations that provide necessary non-county services.

The plan to help more Dane County residents receive their citizenship will require amending the 2017 county budget. The County Executive will work with the County Board on adopting that budget.

“Dane County is committed to ensuring that every resident of our community has access to the opportunity to succeed, to flourish, and to use their unique gifts to help make our community an even stronger and better place for everyone who calls it home,” Parisi concluded. “Giving our neighbors a hand on their path to citizenship is the first step in that process, and we’re proud to do so.”