



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

As National Border Crisis Heightens, Senator Kennedy Secures Critical Funding for Journey's End Refugee Services' Immigration Legal Services Program

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY July 8, 2019

| ISSUE: **REFUGEES, IMMIGRANT, ASYLUM SEEKERS, LEGAL AID OR LEGAL SERVICES**



As Western New York Refugee Resettlement Agency Sees Increase in Need for Immigration Legal Services, Kennedy Announces \$20,000 in State Funding for Accessible Legal Assistance

State Funding Will Help Support Journey's End's Efforts in Providing Comprehensive Immigration Legal Representation to Low-Income Refugees, Asylees, and other Immigrants

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) joined Journey's End Refugees Services Executive Director Karen Andolina Scott, her staff, and members of Buffalo's refugee community Wednesday to announce \$20,000 in state funding secured for the agency. This money will go directly to Journey's End's Immigration Legal Services Program, and will help to ensure that refugee families and asylum seekers across Western New York have access to free, quality legal representation as they navigate processes including naturalization, permanent residency, family reunification, asylum, and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

"Just last month, we saw 100 men, women, and children arrive in the City of Buffalo over the span of just 10 days, after fleeing the war-torn Democratic Republic of the Congo. They were desperate to claim asylum in the United States in order to escape terror and simply survive, and their stories are reflective of what we're seeing on a much more magnified scale nationwide," said **Senator Tim Kennedy**. "Now more than ever, it's important that New York and the City of Good Neighbors is stepping up to support those seeking refuge here, and that includes through exceptional legal assistance at Journey's End. Securing this money was a top priority for me this legislative session, and will continue to fuel the agency's legal services program, and ensure that people have an advocate and a voice."

"Over the last nine years, Journey's End has been committed to providing low-income immigrants and refugees with the immigration legal support they deserve to help them navigate an increasingly complex system," said **Journey's End Executive Director Karen Andolina Scott**. "Changes in administrative policy including travel bans, family separation, and enforcement priorities have caused fear and confusion (at best) among the communities we serve. Buffalo's storied history is populated with the hard work and ingenuity of immigrants and refugees, and its present renaissance is in no small part thanks to their ongoing cultural and economic contributions to our community. The vitality and prosperity

of our city and our state depend on us continuing the historic tradition of welcoming newcomers. We thank local and state officials of New York, especially NYS Senator Tim Kennedy, for their continued support of Journey's End, but more importantly, for their continued support of refugees', asylum-seekers', and all immigrant groups' human rights."

Access to legal representation is critical in protecting rights and assisting families seeking refuge in America, as well as the City of Buffalo. Last year, Journey's End's Immigration Legal Services program assisted over 2,700 clients, and served an additional 750 individuals through community information sessions. These numbers represent an increase in those seeking legal services to assist with immigration needs.

The announcement comes as recent reports of poor conditions for children inside stations along the U.S. - Mexico border reaches new heights, underscoring the need for legal services for those who claim asylum in the United States. According to statistics from the United States Customs and Border Protection, 144,278 migrants were taken into custody at the border back in May - the highest one-month total in 13 years. As a result, border facilities are dangerously overcrowded, and dysfunction and disease have taken over. The New York Times documented a visit by a group of lawyers to a Customs and Border Protection facility in Clint, Texas last month, and the firsthand witness accounts were heartbreaking: sick babies being cared for by other children, toddlers without diapers, and children who hadn't bathed in weeks living in soiled clothing.

Journey's End's mission is to welcome refugees without regard to ethnic origin or creed, and assist them in becoming healthy, independent, contributing members of the community. Refugee resettlement is a prime focus in the organization's daily work, and through their extensive Immigration Legal Services Program, they are able to assist clients through the permanent residency and naturalization processes, as well as family reunification. With the attorneys and DOJ representatives on staff, Journey's End is the only immigration legal

services provider of its kind in Erie County.

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