

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT – CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

California is home to more immigrants than any other state in the U.S. In fact, immigrants continue to play an integral role in the social and economic fabric of all California's communities. Immigration also continues to drive population growth in Contra Costa County, accounting for 47.4% of the population growth in the county between 2015 and 2019.¹ As of 2019 there were 295,400 immigrants in Contra Costa County, of which 48,600 were undocumented, representing 16.4% of the county's foreign-born population². **The majority of people who are undocumented in Contra Costa have lived in the U.S. for over a decade (65%).**³ Undocumented immigrants are also highly active in the workforce, with 90.1% being of working age (16-64 years old).⁴ Moreover, more than one in ten people in Contra Costa are either undocumented themselves or are living with someone who is undocumented.⁵ Therefore, their economic security is inextricably tied to that of their families and their ability to transfer intergenerational wealth to future generations.

Despite making important economic contributions to the county's economy, including 149.6 million which went to federal taxes and \$70.6 went to state and local taxes⁶, many people continue to experience economic hardships primarily due to exclusions detailed in the brief, such as those based on employment status, immigration status and based on race, ethnicity, class and/or gender. Community-based organizations (CBOs) fill some of the gaps in essential services, including legal and economic supports as well as advocacy for more equitable and inclusive policies. Although there is a robust and deeply interconnected undocumented immigrant community, Contra Costa County's infrastructure and CBOs serving undocumented residents is limited compared with other counties and major cities in California. For example, San Francisco has eight public defender deportation defense attorneys and five support staff, whereas Contra Costa only has one program to provide pro bono immigration legal services for the roughly 8,200 cases currently pending in the county.⁷ This is partly a result of both limited philanthropic support and government funding for these types of vital organizations and services.



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GROUPS SUPPORTING THE ECONOMIC SECURITY OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

Stand Together Contra Costa (STCC) is Contra Costa’s only immigrant legal services program and was established as a partnership between the county, philanthropy, and CBOs such as ***Monument Impact***. It operates out of the county’s public defender’s office. STCC provides culturally competent, no-cost rapid response support, legal defense services, and immigrant rights education and training to support families impacted by anti-immigrant policies and practices affecting Contra Costa County residents, regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.⁸ Unfortunately, just this year the County Board of Supervisors rejected a proposal to expand funding for the program, which would have paid for three new attorneys, three legal assistants, and two social workers.⁹

Monument Impact is one of the few organizations located in Contra Costa County that organizes undocumented community members and offers direct services to support their economic security. As part of STCC and convener of the ***Contra Costa Immigrant Rights Alliance***, Monument Impact’s members continue to advocate for increased funding for immigration legal services, eviction defense, rental assistance, and more. Founded in 2001, Monument Impact also operates a day labor center; offers workforce development, entrepreneurship, and leadership development programs; and provides legal services and know your rights workshops to the city of Concord’s immigrant, refugee, and low-income communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Monument Impact’s promotoras, or community health workers, also reached 22,000 residents with information and assistance related to health appointments and rental assistance programs. The organization also raised funds to support individuals who were ineligible for COVID relief payments.

Additional organizations supporting the economic security of undocumented immigrants in California have worked to expand language access at public meetings like the Measure X Community Advisory Board meetings, which are meant to enable community participation and input into how the county uses its half-cent sales tax revenues to fund critical community services. Other organizations have also been working to expand funding for Contra Costa CARES, the county’s healthcare program for uninsured adults, many of whom are undocumented. As the state implements its MediCal expansion for all low-income undocumented Californians, there will be a greater need for culturally competent, community-based outreach and education to support enrollment and transitions.

FUNDER SPOTLIGHT: Y&H SODA FOUNDATION

Based in Contra Costa County, the [Y&H Soda Foundation](#), which funds both STCC and Monument Impact, was motivated by persistent and growing disparities in the Bay Area to center racial equity in its work. It began looking beyond obvious disparities and placing emphasis on those often left behind or left out—immigrants, refugees, asylees, the undocumented, the formerly incarcerated, and women working in atypical sectors like construction. It also took into account the gentrification of certain neighborhoods and the suburbanization of poverty: as communities were pushed farther from the urban core, needed services were not as readily accessible. Y&H Soda’s strategy involved using a two-pronged approach, moving to fund more than direct service delivery; investing in **systems change, policy, advocacy, and organizing work** as well as investing more deeply in organizations led by Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian people to support leaders committed to advancing equity in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

“To make that shift several years ago, we became more deliberate in how we engaged diverse leaders serving populations and neighborhoods falling further behind. We targeted and expanded investments to organizations led by people of color for on-the-ground programs and community organizing efforts. The events of 2020 reinforced for us the importance of this focus and the need to continue this journey with other foundations committed to social change in the region.”

Luis Artegea, Y&H Soda Chief Executive Officer

Endnotes

¹ New American Economy, 2021, “New Research Shows Immigrants in Contra Costa are Playing an Outsize Role in Several Key Industries, including 41.2 Percent of STEM, over 38 Percent of Construction, and 36.3 Percent of Hospitality,” New American Economy, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/press-release/new-research-shows-immigrants-in-contra-costa-are-playing-an-outsize-role-in-several-key-industries-including-41-2-percent-of-stem-over-38-percent-of-construction-and-36-3-percent-of-hospitality/>

² Data taken from USC Dornsife Equity Research Institute, “Contra Costa County,” California Immigrant Data Portal. accessed June 6, 2022. <https://immigrantdataca.org/data-summaries#/?geoSectionName=County&geo=0400000000006013> & [New Americans in Contra Costa, The Demographic & Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the County](#)

³ USC Dornsife Equity Research Institute, “Contra Costa County,” California Immigrant Data Portal. accessed June 6, 2022.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ New American Economy 2021, New Americans In Contra Costa: The Demographic & Economic Contributions of Immigrants in the County https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/G4G_Contra-Costa_V4.pdf

⁷ TRAC, “Individuals in Immigration Court by Their Address.” Accessed October 10, 2022. <https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/addressrep/>.

⁸ Stand Together Contra Costa, “Our Program – Stand Together Contra Costa,” Accessed October 10, 2022. <https://standtogethercontracosta.org/about/our-program/>.

⁹ Lisa Fernandez, 2022, “Contra Costa County nixes hiring more attorneys to help undocumented immigrants,” KTVU, <https://www.ktvu.com/news/contra-costa-county-nixes-hiring-more-attorneys-to-help-undocumented-immigrants>.