

Support the Immigrant Legal Defense Act

An Act Ensuring Access to Equitable Representation in Immigration Proceedings

[S.1127](#) (Sen. Gomez) and [H.1954](#) (Reps. Rogers, F. Moran)

With a federal administration committed to the mass detention and deportation of immigrants, and a new Congress actively stripping away existing rights and privileges, the Commonwealth must urgently intervene to prevent the deportation of immigrants who live, work and pay taxes in Massachusetts.

The Immigrant Legal Defense Act would create a public and private-funded program to provide no-cost immigration legal defense to immigrants in Massachusetts who are at imminent risk of deportation, especially those held in federal immigration detention.

FACTS:

In immigration court, having an attorney is critical protection against deportation and permanent family separation. There is no right to a government-paid lawyer in immigration court. Those who cannot afford a lawyer must navigate our complex immigration proceedings alone.



Immigrants are 5 times more likely to win relief from deportation if they are represented by counsel. **In Massachusetts, 55% of immigrants with pending cases are navigating their proceedings without a lawyer.**

Detained immigrants with a lawyer are 10 times more likely to win relief than are detained immigrants without one. **There are 369 people in federal immigration detention in Massachusetts as of January 2025.**

Similar programs exist in California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Washington.

THE SOLUTION: The Immigrant Legal Defense Act would:

- ✓ Subject to appropriation, **require the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) to grant funds to qualified immigration legal service providers** and the nonprofit organizations and law firms who employ them to provide no-cost legal defense to eligible low-income immigrants.
- ✓ **Develop a statewide system** of immigration legal representation coordinated by an existing or established nonprofit organization identified by ORI, which will provide rigorous screening and assigning of cases and beneficiaries.
- ✓ **Establish an advisory board** to include representation by the Committee for Public Counsel Services, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, MIRA Coalition, and at least three community-based organizations that directly serve immigrant populations.