



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, August 27, 2025

Organizations Unite to Launch Liberty Fund Supporting Legal Empowerment for Orange County Immigrants

Santa Ana, CA – August 27, 2025 – A coalition of philanthropic and community organizations in partnership with Orange County Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento announced today the formation of the Orange County Liberty Fund, a first-of-its-kind initiative in California designed to empower immigrant and refugee communities with the tools, knowledge, and resources needed to navigate and influence the legal system. The announcement was made at a press conference attended by philanthropic and community leaders.

The Liberty Fund brings together \$1.5 million in public and private funding to strengthen local nonprofits serving immigrant children and families. By expanding programs that educate community members on asserting their rights, navigating legal processes, and advocating for systemic change, the Fund ensures that immigrant and refugee communities can actively participate in shaping policies that affect their lives.

“The OC Liberty Fund will help ensure residents understand immigration laws and processes so they can more effectively make informed decisions, advocate for themselves, engage in mutual support, and maintain self-sufficiency,” said Carlos Perea, Founding Executive Director of the Harbor Institute for Immigrant and Economic Justice. “More than ever, we must invest in building sustainable, lasting knowledge and power among immigrant and refugee communities across the region.”

Representatives from the following organizations spoke at the press conference:

- **Vicente Sarmiento**, Orange County Supervisor
- **Joanna Jackson**, President & CEO, Weingart Foundation
- **Carlos Perea**, Founding Executive Director, Harbor Institute for Immigrant and Economic Justice
- **Tracy La**, Co-founder & Executive Director, VietRISE
- **Taryn Palumbo**, Executive Director, Orange County Grantmakers (Convening Partner)

"Immigrants and refugees have long been an essential part of what makes Orange County—and all Southern California—a vibrant, industrious, and beautiful place to call home," said Joanna Jackson, President & CEO of Weingart Foundation. By investing in trusted, community-led organizations, we're helping ensure that immigrant families have access to the services and resources they need. This public-private partnership reflects what's possible when we center community leadership, build with intention, and act in solidarity. We are grateful to Supervisor Sarmiento for his bold leadership and to our philanthropic partners for coming together in shared commitment to our immigrant neighbors."

The Liberty Fund represents a critical public-private partnership addressing the urgent need for legal empowerment in Orange County. Across the globe, five billion people face unmet justice needs, and marginalized communities—including undocumented immigrants—bear the greatest burden. By putting legal knowledge directly in the hands of those most affected, the Liberty Fund expands access to justice in ways that are scalable, sustainable, and transformative.

"At a time when immigrant families face vicious abuse from unjust federal policies and an absence of due process, it is more important than ever that we stand together," said Orange County District 2 Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento. "We must support trusted community organizations fighting for the rights and dignity of our families, friends, and neighbors. I am proud to be part of creating this innovative partnership and helping fund this critical work that empowers our communities."

Legal empowerment is the cornerstone of the Fund's approach. It humanizes the law, fosters community solidarity, and equips individuals to understand, use, and shape the legal systems that impact their lives. Through the Liberty Fund, nonprofits are resourced to provide training, clinics, volunteer support, and other programs that help families assert their rights and navigate immigration processes. This holistic model integrates professional expertise with community leadership, ensuring that the fight for justice is led by the people it affects.

"The Liberty Fund wasn't created just to respond to crises; it was also built to strengthen migrant power in Orange County, especially among communities too often overlooked, like Vietnamese and Southeast Asian immigrants," said Tracy La, Executive Director of VietRISE. "Its purpose is to ensure lasting access to the tools that keep our communities safe, to connect OC's diverse immigrant population through real solidarity, and to establish permanent infrastructure for our future, all of which will be supported by this Fund."

The following organizations are grantees of the Liberty Fund: Access CA Services, Ahri, Alianza Translatinx, Arab American Civic Council, Asian Americans Advancing Justice

Southern California, Center for Asian Americans in Action, Chispa Education Fund, Community Legal Aid SoCal, Council on American Islamic Relations Los Angeles (CAIR-LA), El Centro Cultural de México, Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project, Harbor Institute for Immigrant and Economic Justice, Latino Center for Prevention and Action, LGBTQ Center OC, OC Rapid Response Network, Orange County Communities Organized for Responsible Development (OCCORD), Orange County Justice Fund, Public Law Center, Resilience Orange County, UCI School of Law Immigrant & Racial Justice Solidarity Clinic, VietRISE, Western State College of Law Immigration and Deportation Defense Clinic, and World Relief Southern California

By mobilizing communities, the Liberty Fund not only strengthens individual legal outcomes but also builds collective resilience and democratic engagement. Knowledge empowers communities to participate actively in civic life, support one another, and advocate for systemic change, reinforcing the principles of justice and democracy at the local level.

About the Orange County Liberty Fund

The mission of the OC Immigrant and Refugee Liberty Fund is to empower immigrant and refugee communities in Orange County to lead their own fight for justice. By democratizing laws and fostering active engagement with legal systems, we empower individuals to know, use, and shape laws impacting their lives.

Media Contacts:

Harbor Institute:

Mai Do, Research and Policy Manager
mai@harborinstituteoc.org

Office of Supervisor Sarmiento:

Robert Villegas, Communications Advisor
Robert.Villegas@ocgov.com / 714-673-4575

Orange County Grantmakers:

Lisa James, KTM Agency
lisa@ktmagency.com / 719-201-3619

VietRISE:

Luis Serrano, Communications Coordinator
luis@vietrise.org / 818-277-3344

Weingart Foundation:

Silvia Fuentes, Communications Director
sfuentes@weingartfnd.org / 626-375-1851