

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 14, 2021

Contact: dignityfund@gcir.org

GCIR and Philanthropic Partners Announce Creation of California Dignity for Families Fund

Private Fund Will Support Migrant Families and Unaccompanied Children in Partnership with Public Investment Proposed Today by Gov. Newsom

PETALUMA, CA - In partnership with California philanthropy, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) today announced the launch of the California Dignity for Families Fund, seeking to raise \$20 million to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of migrants at the southern California border, ensure due process for asylum seekers, support their integration into receiving communities, and restore dignity to the asylum process. The Fund was set up as part of a public-private partnership with Governor Gavin Newsom, who today proposed an aligned investment of \$25 million for services to unaccompanied youth and children in support of the safety and well-being of families, especially newcomer youth as they settle and integrate into California communities. The Fund will work alongside and reinforce the state investment to support needs at the border and in receiving communities in California. The Fund's national counterpart, the Dignity for Families Fund, also launched today.

To learn more about the Fund, visit www.gcir.org/CADignityFund.

Led by GCIR, in collaboration with Hyphen and Tides Foundation, the California Dignity for Families Fund has an initial fundraising goal of \$20 million. Early supporters include The James Irvine Foundation, Emerson Collective, the California Community Foundation, Sunlight Giving, the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, The California Endowment, Weingart Foundation, and Rosenberg Foundation.

Under the previous federal administration, those seeking asylum were forced to wait in Mexico in harsh and dangerous conditions, subject to violence and extortion. These migrants—and many others who made the long journey more recently—are now being admitted to the United States and processed in a more humane manner. An astounding number of them are children traveling alone. Due to the high number of children who had been waiting at the border, the number of entries this year will likely surpass previous records (57,000 arrivals in 2014 and 76,000 in 2019). The number of families with children is also rising, as people flee violence, persecution, poverty, and the devastating impacts from climate change. In addition to the Central American populations that dominate news coverage, migrants include diverse and vulnerable populations, such as Black (including Africans), indigenous, and LGBTQI+ individuals.

The California Dignity for Families Fund will support non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in providing a humane and effective alternative to detention and surveillance. Through humanitarian relief, legal services, and case management, these NGOs will assist migrants when they arrive at the border and support their settlement in destination communities. Assistance will also support unaccompanied children and youth after they are released from federal care and reunited with family or placed with a sponsor in California. This reduces trauma for children and families, facilitates their stabilization, and supports Americans in welcoming new members to their communities. As the current administration moves forward the longer-term

work of addressing the causes of migration in sending countries, philanthropy, NGOs, local and state governments, and civil society actors all have a role to play. The California Dignity for Families Fund leverages the strengths of these various sectors to establish vital long-term infrastructure that can address the needs of migrants now and in the future, helping to ensure that all Californians thrive no matter where they were born.

With this new fund, California philanthropy and Governor Newsom build on the success of their partnership in 2020, when they provided a combined \$150 million in emergency cash assistance to undocumented immigrants during the Covid-19 pandemic through the private [California Immigrant Resilience Fund](#) and the state-funded [Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants](#) initiative.

“California’s diversity makes us a more vibrant and resilient state, and we are a better place because of our immigrant communities. I am grateful to our philanthropic partners raising an additional \$20 million to support newly arrived migrant families, including newly arrived children and youth, through the California Dignity for Families Fund,” said **Governor Newsom**.

“We wish to thank Governor Newsom and our philanthropic partners for their leadership,” said **Marissa Tirona, President of Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees**. “Together, we will ensure that community-based organizations are resourced to meet the immediate and long-term needs of those seeking to build a better life in the United States, honor the humanity and courage of migrant families, and restore dignity to the asylum process.”

“We feel compelled to invest in this crucially important and urgent effort to reimagine support services to migrants in California and to restore dignity to the asylum process,” said **Don Howard, President and CEO of The James Irvine Foundation**. “Those who are arriving in California need this assistance and, at the same time, we can pilot a better system for welcoming immigrants into this state.”

“Migrant families desperately need a restored asylum process and streamlined humanitarian relief at the border,” said **Laurene Powell Jobs, Founder and President of Emerson Collective**. “I commend Governor Newsom’s leadership and hope others will join these efforts.”

“Addressing the humanitarian crisis at the California border requires meaningful long-term investment in infrastructure and system change,” said **Antonia Hernández, President and CEO of the California Community Foundation**. “The support of public-private partnerships like the California Dignity for Families Fund and innovative programs like the L.A. Justice Fund, which ensures due process and protections for immigrant families, are critical to meet the needs of our most vulnerable migrant communities. When the state, counties, cities, and philanthropy work together across sectors, sustainable solutions are possible.”

“The Haas, Jr. Fund believes in community, family, and human rights, and we look forward to working with other funders through the California Dignity for Families Fund to help make our southern border more reflective of our nation’s highest ideals,” said **Cathy Cha, President and CEO of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund**. “By working together, philanthropy can ensure that immigrants at the border have access to critical services and supports, and that they are treated with the dignity they deserve.”

“Immigrant families who are striving to create better, safer, more secure lives for themselves in California should receive respect and care as they forge their new paths,” said **Nicole Taylor**,

President and CEO of Silicon Valley Community Foundation. “This new fund will help uphold this ideal, and Silicon Valley Community Foundation is proud to be part of this effort.”

“TCE is pleased to join our philanthropic colleagues in support of this effort, and it will require a concerted public-private partnership to bring some measure of dignity and humanitarian support to families impacted by this crisis,” said **Dr. Robert K. Ross, President and CEO of The California Endowment.**

“Vulnerable children and families are in urgent need of humanitarian aid and refuge,” said **Miguel A. Santana, President and CEO of the Weingart Foundation.** “We are proud to contribute to this Fund, which will create systems to protect families seeking asylum and support their long-term well-being.”

GCIR will bring its more than 30 years of experience as the nation’s only immigrant-focused philanthropic network to oversee the California Dignity for Families Fund. Tides Foundation, building on more than four decades of strategic solutions including grants management and financial oversight, will act as the fiscal manager for the Fund, helping to receive, disburse, and manage these critical resources to get them to heavily impacted border regions and destination communities. “We are proud to partner with GCIR,” said Janiece Evans-Page, CEO of Tides, “and to work at the nexus of funders, changemakers, and policy to push the boundaries with every dollar and idea to fuel real and lasting change oriented to immigrant justice and addressing critical needs at the border.”

###

GCIR galvanizes philanthropy to advance immigrant justice and belonging. In the past four years, GCIR worked with California philanthropy to deploy \$327 million in response to anti-immigrant federal policies. In 2020, GCIR launched the California Immigrant Resilience Fund, which raised over \$50 million to provide relief to more than 80,000 undocumented immigrant households experiencing severe economic hardship as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. GCIR also co-founded and managed the UndocuFund for Disaster Relief in Sonoma County, which raised over \$7 million to provide direct cash assistance to almost 8,000 undocumented immigrants and their families who were affected by the 2017 wildfires. Nationally, since 2012, the organization has worked with funders in 19 states to deploy nearly \$80 million to build local capacity for immigration legal services, advocacy, and organizing.