

FW: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Agenda Item 16.2 Contract No. 6003874 for Clark Hill

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Good morning,

Please find the below public comment to attach to your business today. One of us will show you how to save this to eScibe.

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From: Christine Sauve <csauve@michiganimmigrant.org>

Sent: Monday, February 20, 2023 11:37 PM

To: CC Public Comment <CCPublicComment@detroitmi.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Agenda Item 16.2 Contract No. 6003874 for Clark Hill

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing regarding item 16.2 on the 2/21/23 Formal Session [agenda](#): Johnson, reso. autho. Contract No. 6003874 - 100% City Funding – AMEND 1 – To Provide an Extension of Time and an Increase of Funds for Legal Counsel on Immigration Employee Sponsorships for the City of Detroit. – Contractor: Clark Hill, PLC.

My Name is Christine Sauvé and I serve as one of the Co-Chairs for the Detroit Immigration Task Force. I work for the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center and I am also a Detroit resident living in District 5. I am writing to add more context and background as City Council considers item 16.2. On 1/18/23 Corp. Counsel Mallett made some statements in the Internal Operations committee that were inaccurate, misleading, and caused subsequent confusion regarding the purpose of this contract. Another Law Dept. staff member later told the committee that the services of Clark Hill are only for employee sponsorships for visa types such as H1B and TN. Like the council members, I, too, am waiting to hear how many foreign-born employees the \$80K contract will help. Typically these types of sponsorships help people from middle and upper income backgrounds who may or may not live in the city of Detroit but their employment helps the city fill needed positions that they have been otherwise unable to fill.

The confusion came when, in his statements on 1/18/23, Corp. Counsel stated that "Clark Hill was the entity that we used to help assist us in the process of getting all of the Afghan refugees through all of the federal, state, and local paperwork that had to be done in order to allow them to begin their new lives in this country." At another point Corp. Counsel stated that Clark Hill has "handled the Afghan refugees, all 500 of those cases, in terms of getting their paperwork in cooperation with the city of Detroit." Corp. Counsel further implied that the city of Detroit was working directly with the U.S. State Dept and that the city was providing direct assistance to refugees.

These statements are wholly incorrect. In FY22, the State of Michigan welcomed 2,000 Afghans through Operation Allies Welcome. The U.S. Department of State worked with national and local refugee resettlement agencies as well as our state refugee office to coordinate the entry, travel, and services for Afghan arrivals to Michigan. Refugee resettlement agencies like Samaritas, Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan, and USCRI are responsible for case management and assisting new arrivals with finding employment and housing. In Detroit, the Office of Immigrant Affairs has played a supportive role in helping to find available housing but the city is not responsible for new arrivals and does not provide financial assistance to newcomers.

The federal government granted these individuals humanitarian parole which does not include a permanent immigration status. With regard to immigration legal services, this means each person must apply for asylum (or another available form of relief) after they arrive. The City of Detroit and Clark Hill were *not* involved in assisting this population with applying for asylum. It was Michigan's nonprofit immigration legal service provider network, along with volunteer pro bono attorneys, that rallied together to help this unprecedented number of Afghan arrivals apply for asylum, with some assistance from state government and private philanthropy. Agencies like the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center and the Southwest Detroit Immigrant and Refugee Center worked diligently to assist asylum seekers without any financial support from the City of Detroit. Despite the fact that some of these individuals settled in Detroit, the City of Detroit did not pay for attorneys to assist with their paperwork. This is, however, something the City of Detroit *could* provide for newcomers. Unlike in our criminal legal system, immigrants in immigration court, even children, are not provided legal counsel if they cannot afford it. In recognition of this inequity, each year cities like Columbus, Cincinnati, St. Paul, Chicago and others have been investing in publicly funded immigration legal service programs. Nashville just invested \$1.8 million of their ARPA funds into immigration legal services. In Michigan, since 2017 Washtenaw County has annually funded immigration legal services for county residents. To date, the City of Detroit *has not* invested in immigration legal services for low-income Detroit immigrant residents -- but it could. According to recent ACS data, there are approximately 13,565 foreign-born low-income non-citizens in Detroit in need of immigration legal services. Such legal representation is critical for helping people who have arrived as humanitarian parolees apply for asylum, assisting residents in applying for permanent status and naturalization, and maintaining family unity. Providing this type of assistance would go a long way to keeping families together and helping current Detroit residents stay in the city and continue to make important contributions as taxpayers, workers, and small business owners.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this clarification and context as you consider the Clark Hill contract.

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