

Testimony

Good afternoon

My name is Fresia Guzman, I am the director of the Newcomers/Case Management program at Identity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony related to the Special Appropriation for the FY24 Operating Budget, for the Respite Center for Arriving Immigrants grant program, SAMU Foundation.

Identity Newcomers Case Management program has been working directly with SAMU's Respite Center in Montgomery County since September 2022. SAMU has been a fundamental pillar in supporting the arrival of migrants to our County. They are the ones who have received the individuals and families arriving in the area by buses or planes.

Because of the Respite Center, newly arrived families have found a place to avoid sleeping on the streets. We at Identity have worked with many of the families who have been placed in SAMU, offering them case management services including help finding housing. The Respite Center buys us precious time that our case managers need to provide families with all the services they need while they are in a stable and safe environment.

Identity also has the challenging task of supporting immigrant families who are homeless. On these occasions, we work with SAMU to find a space for them in the Respite Center. When they do not have availability, the cases get a lot more complicated. We must involve the crisis center, book hotel rooms, families then resist leaving the hotels, and the stabilization process gets severely interrupted and more costly.

Identity wholeheartedly supports the continued funding of the Respite Center. Providing a safe and welcoming temporary shelter for migrant families arriving in Montgomery County is fundamental and a big part to avoid migrants in the streets.

Thank you so much.