



Immigrants and International Advisory Council reaches important milestone

July 18 was a day of celebration as nearly 100 community representatives gathered to recognize the DHS Immigrants and Internationals Advisory Council's 10th anniversary.

The event started with the reading of a County Proclamation by Rich Fitzgerald, county executive, that recognized July 18 as DHS Immigrants and Internationals Advisory Council Day. Fitzgerald also presented Barbara Murock, Immigrants and Internationals Initiative manager, with a plaque recognizing her tremendous commitment to both the DHS Immigrants and Internationals Initiative as well as her work to make Allegheny County a more welcoming place. Barbara will be retiring from DHS at the end of August.

Marc Cherna, DHS director, spoke about the Department's upcoming plans for the Immigrants and Internationals Initiative. These plans include recruiting a senior manager for equity and inclusion to give visibility to, and oversee, programs for immigrants and internationals, LGBTQIA+/SOGIE, and racial disproportionality and diversity. The next Immigrants and Internationals Initiative manager will report to this new position and will benefit from this heightened visibility and commitment.

During the celebration, 10-year council members and current Compass AmeriCorps members were recognized for their commitment to immigrant communities. Community Champion awards were distributed to individuals who have gone above and beyond to support the work of the Council. These Community Champions were John Oliver from Paragon Foods; Mary Jayne McCullough from Global Wordsmith; Andi Fischhoff, community volunteer; Jenna Baron of ARYSE (Alliance for Refugee Youth, Support and Education); Paula Kelly from the Whitehall Library; and Carlos Torres from the Pittsburgh Human Relations Commission.

"It has been rewarding to see the Advisory Council members find their voices; grow as strong, effective leaders; and help create a more responsive and inclusive region. Individually and collectively, the Advisory Council embodies the Margaret Mead quote, 'Never doubt that a small group thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has,'" Barbara said.

Since 2008, the Immigrants and Internationals Advisory Council has led multiple efforts to support accessibility, cultural competency, and integration for residents in Allegheny County. These efforts have included the creation of immigrant-led support groups that are now a national model; Compass AmeriCorps, which assists organizations serving refugees and immigrants; and Immigrant Services and Connections (ISAC), a six-agency partnership that offers service coordinators and navigators who communicate with clients in their preferred language to assess needs and connect them to services. The advisory council has also created a Community Blueprint to engage the broader community in helping immigrants thrive in Allegheny County.

To learn more about the Immigrants and Advisory Council and all of its work over the last 10 years, please visit the [I&I section of the DHS website](#).