

HATE FREE ZONE

January 28, 2008

Dear Governor Gregoire:

We, the undersigned organizations that work with and serve the residents of Washington State, write to thank you for your strong leadership in agreeing to issue an Executive Order creating the Washington New Americans statewide policy council, and to urge you to support the second, critical prong of the Washington New Americans initiative—new funding in the amount of \$2 million per year for three years to spur statewide economic development by broadening the network and building the capacity of organizations across the state to provide naturalization assistance to legal permanent residents, including those not on public benefits. As leading faith, labor, business, advocacy, and community-based organizations, we believe that both the policy council and funding that boosts economic development by bolstering the network of organizations providing naturalization assistance will play an important role in a comprehensive, proactive and sustainable approach to integrating Washington's new immigrants and their families.

Your pioneering Executive Order creating a statewide policy council will represent a significant step forward, both for Washington's immigrants and for our economy. The statewide policy council will help Washington capitalize on the full benefits of immigrant integration as an economic and social development strategy, building on our rapidly changing demographics to secure both our state's future development and its global competitiveness. We believe that the council will play a critical role in ensuring that immigrants can access essential services, including citizenship, English language learning services, healthcare, workforce opportunities, and education, and that our state's economic, social, and civic fabric will be significantly strengthened as a result.

While we greatly appreciate the leadership you showed in moving to issue the Executive Order, now is the time to also support the inclusion in the 2008 state budget of new funding for economic development in the amount of \$2 million for FY 2008. This funding would turn a critical and immediate need into a significant economic development opportunity—Washington currently has 135,000 legal permanent residents eligible for citizenship, a clearly proven mechanism for boosting economic development through greater workforce and civic participation. Other vanguard states, such as Illinois, New York, and Massachusetts, recognizing the opportunity for high-impact economic development through a relatively small expenditure of targeted resources, have allocated significant sums of money to building their network of community-based organizations that provide naturalization services, and bolstering the capacity of those organizations to ramp up their provision of such services. We strongly urge you to do the same—such an economic development program would go far beyond current state funding in Washington, which helps only 3,000 immigrants per year to naturalize, and is limited to those eligible for public benefits.

Governor Gregoire, we appreciate your strong leadership in moving to create the

statewide policy council. We urge you to fully leverage the impact of your forthcoming Executive Order and help Washington realize the full potential of our immigrants by supporting a budget proviso for new funding in the amount of \$2 million per year to spur economic development by broadening and strengthening Washington's diverse network of organizations providing naturalization assistance.

Sincerely,

Asian Counseling and Referral Service
Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Pierce County
American Immigration Lawyers Association, Washington Chapter
Archdiocesan Housing Authority
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance
CAIR Coalition
CASA Latina
Catholic Community Services of Western Washington
Center for Social Justice
Children's Alliance
Chinese Information and Services Center
Church Council of Greater Seattle
Community to Community Development
East African Community Services
El Centro de la Raza
Hate Free Zone
Horn of Africa Services
International District Housing Alliance
Japanese American Citizens League, Pacific Northwest District Office
Jewish Federation
Korean Women's Association
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Lao Association of Snohomish County
Lao Community Service Office
Latino Community Fund of Washington State
Latino-Latina Bar Association of Washington
Literacy Source
Lutheran Community Services Northwest
Lutheran Public Policy Office
Minority Executive Directors Coalition of King County
My Service Mind
National Employment Law Project
National Organization for Women, Seattle Chapter
Neighborhood House
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

Opportunity Industrial Center of Washington
Progressive States Network
Refugee Support Service Coalition
Religious Coalition for the Common Good
SeaMar Community Health Centers
SEIU Healthcare 775NW
SEIU Local 6
SEIU Local 925
Solid Ground
Somali Community Services Coalition
Somali Community Services of Seattle
Statewide Poverty Action Network
Tenants Union of Washington
Ukrainian Community Center of Washington
United Auto Workers Local 4121
United Food and Commercial Workers Local 21
UNITE HERE! Local 8
Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle
US-Mexico Chamber of Commerce, Pacific Northwest Chapter
Washington Association of Churches
Washington Community Action Network
Washington Education Association
Washington State Hispanic Legislative Day
Washington State Labor Council
Washington State National Organization for Women
WPEA/UFCW Local 365

*Cc: Speaker Frank Chopp
Senator Lisa Brown
Senator Margarita Prentice
Representative Helen Sommers
Cindy Zehnder
Victor Moore
Marty Brown
Ron Judd
A Scott Heinze
Rich Nafziger
Majken Ryherd*