

# City of Cincinnati



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**Meeka D. Owens**  
Cincinnati City Council

April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**MOTION: Exploring the Welcoming City Accreditation**

**WE MOVE** that the City Administration be, and hereby is, authorized and directed to pursue the Certified Welcoming designation from Welcoming America on behalf of the City of Cincinnati.

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Councilmember Meeka D. Owens

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan James", is written over a horizontal line.

Councilmember Ryan James

## STATEMENT

The City of Cincinnati has a long and established history of welcoming immigrants and refugees whose contributions strengthen the civic, cultural, and economic fabric of the community. Data documented by Cincinnati Compass, a collaborative of the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, the City of Cincinnati, and more than 65 community partners, demonstrates that recent population growth in the region is driven largely by immigrants and refugees relocating to Greater Cincinnati, underscoring the importance of a proactive and coordinated welcoming strategy for the City's long-term vitality.

In 2017, Cincinnati formally affirmed its status as a welcoming city and has since taken meaningful steps to support immigrant and refugee residents, including sustained investment in legal services through the Immigrant and Refugee Law Center beginning in 2018. These actions reflect a strong foundation upon which the City can further institutionalize immigrant inclusion.

The Green Cincinnati Plan includes a strategic priority to develop a "Climate Migration Response Plan." This work includes efforts to make newcomers of any background feel welcome and have ease in navigating our city and culture.

Welcoming America's **Certified Welcoming** designation provides a nationally recognized, evidence-based framework for local governments to assess and strengthen immigrant inclusion efforts across seven core areas: Civic Engagement; Connected Communities; Economic Development; Education; Equitable Access; Government and Community Leadership; and Safe Communities. The program's tiered one-to-five-star structure allows municipalities of varying capacity to demonstrate progress and continuous improvement.

The certification process—consisting of a self-assessment, desktop review, evaluative audit, and final report—offers an objective, third-party evaluation that highlights community strengths and identifies opportunities for growth. Cities such as Detroit, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Dayton report that achieving Certified Welcoming status has increased accountability, attracted regional and national investment, and embedded welcoming practices across government operations.

Cincinnati already benefits from a robust ecosystem of immigrant-serving organizations, faith institutions, schools, workforce development entities, legal aid providers, and business leaders whose work aligns closely with Welcoming America's standards. Leveraging this existing capacity through a formal certification process would provide a shared framework to align City departments, strengthen partnerships, and guide future policy and investment over the four-year certification period.

DR  
CAL-CCSI  
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