

**ORDINANCE AND RESOLUTION AUTHORIZATION FORM**

**CADDO PARISH COMMISSION**

**TITLE**

ORDINANCE AMENDING THE 2022 BUDGET OF ESTIMATED REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE RIVERBOAT FUND AND OIL AND GAS FUND

**(Ordinance No. 6191 of 2022)**

**ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Commissioner John Paul Young**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** Amending the budget of Estimated Revenues and Expenditures for the Riverboat and Oil and Gas Fund to provide an appropriation of \$10,000 for LA-AID.

**Background and Capacity of Organization**

Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention (LA-AID) is an organization of volunteers who became active in the fall of 2019 in response to the burgeoning population of asylum seekers being held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers in rural Louisiana. In the past 5 years, Louisiana went from having 1 immigration detention center to having 8 large detention centers.

Nearly all the people transported to Louisiana by the federal government are healthy adults, affirmed to remain in the United States because of a credible fear of persecution or torture. Each person has been approved to continue his or her case in the court system while living with a sponsor (a family member or friend), who is a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident.

With 16 partner organizations, LA-AID has filed a federal administrative complaint that the privately-owned detention facilities in Louisiana, who contract with ICE, have been releasing immigrants against federal agency policy into remote areas and in unsafe conditions without resources to contact their families or arrange customary transportation.

Detention facilities are required to provide immigrants in their care with free and safe transportation to the nearest public transport center (national bus station or airport) and allow each person to talk with their sponsor to make travel arrangements. However, it is well documented that these policies are not being followed in Louisiana and privately-owned facilities are in violation of ICE's Performance-Based National Detention Standards (PBNDS), established in 2011.

**Prior Experience of Organization, Joint Group Application and Collaboration, & Identify Needs and Gaps in Services in Neighborhood**

There are 3 detention centers within a 3-hour drive of Shreveport: Jena/LaSalle Detention Facility in Jena, LA; Winn Correctional Center in Winnfield, LA; and Jackson Parish Correctional Center in Jonesboro, LA. The Shreveport-based chapter of LA-AID has been actively rescuing individuals who need safe transportation assistance from these facilities since February 2021. While there are

many established, emergency-support immigration NGOs in “border states” such as Texas and Arizona, Louisiana does not have any similar nonprofits supporting similar post-release assistance.

Therefore, our volunteers receive notice each day if individuals will be released that same day in rural Louisiana and drive 4-6 hours round-trip to pick up the guest so that each immigrant will have safe transportation and accommodations as they travel through the nearest regional transportation hubs found in Caddo Parish.

Our volunteer-led organization purchases pre-paid phones so that guests can call their families and book travel arrangements. Volunteers provide translation services, assist with flights or bus tickets, and ensure that each person eats and has a safe place to spend a night. Volunteers drive guests to the airport each day before their flights and walk them to a TSA Agent.

**Extent of Neighborhood Involvement & Description of Project and Soundness of Project**

This work has been coordinated out of an expanded office affiliated with the Church for the Highlands where guests can cook meals, wash clothing, shower, use Internet and mobile phones, print boarding passes, and rest comfortably. The new nonprofit is led by two unpaid, full-time volunteers and many additional volunteers from church congregations across Caddo Parish. The team is also actively coordinating with their counterparts in other Louisiana cities.

Over 436 immigrants traveled through Caddo Parish between March and July 2021 and were assisted by LA-AID. Between July – December 2021, our volunteers drove 16,378 miles and helped 798 people from over 46 countries reunite with family and friends around the United States as they safely traveled through Caddo Parish.

While we are glad to help guests in need unite their families safely, hosting new and unexpected guests for weeks and weeks has also pushed the limits of our professional capacity and the generosity of our hosts. Support from the Parish of Caddo would help ensure that our organization is able to continue operating and meet the public safety crisis that has emerged in our region.

**KEY STAFF CONTACT:** Hayley Barnett

**AUTHORIZATION**

Department Head Hayley Barnett Date 1/26/2022

Legal \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Administrator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

