

Resolution No. 866-2020

AN EMERGENCY RESOLUTION

By Council Member Slife

Urging the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services agents and administration, and all relevant agencies, to immediately return Seak (Johnny) Sorn to his family and not proceed with deportation.

FOR ADOPTION
November 4, 2020

WHEREAS, Seak (Johnny) Sorn, is a resident of the West Park neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio, and owns Sorn Properties with his wife, Megan. They have made such an impact on their community during the COVID-19 pandemic that they were featured in the Westpark Neighborhood Magazine, Summer and Fall issues; and

WHEREAS, Johnny and Megan Sorn have made upwards of 5,000 masks through Megan's quilting business, Imagine That Designs, for essential workers and local Cleveland Hope Exchange volunteers passing out food, have created employment for five people who were otherwise furloughed, and continue giving to first responders and The Giving Project; and

WHEREAS, on Monday, October 19, 2020, Johnny Sorn was pulling in his trash cans at home when U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services agents took him into custody to process him for deportation; and

WHEREAS, despite Mr. Sorn holding a valid card as a permanent resident of the United States of America, he is now being held in the Geauga County jail; and

WHEREAS, Johnny Sorn came to the United States in 1979 as a six year old refugee escaping the genocide of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; he and his family were each given permanent residency with a green card without an expiration date, and they forged a life amid poverty in the San Diego ghettos without any English language skills and no connections; and

WHEREAS, he graduated with a high school diploma and worked in manufacturing, but in 2010 after asking a friend for a ride to the convenient store, his friend was arrested for possession of ecstasy with intent to sell, and Johnny was charged with the same offense, even though he had no idea there were drugs in the car; and

WHEREAS, Johnny pled guilty in court to avoid prison, as instructed, but there was no mention that his plea could impact his immigration status; he walked away from the court hearing with no understanding that he was now considered a felon, and was not informed of his felony record until 2018 while applying for a job; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Johnny Sorn is an upstanding citizen and will continue to contribute to our community as a business person and philanthropist if returned home to his family and West Park neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, this Council respectfully urges that this family be reunified in the most expeditious manner, and that Mr. Johnny Sorn be released from the Geauga County jail without any processing for deportation, so that the Sorn's can continue living as a family and their positive impact on our community; and

WHEREAS, this resolution constitutes an emergency measure for the immediate preservation of public peace, property, health or safety, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CLEVELAND:

Section 1. That this Council urges the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services agents and administration, and all relevant agencies, to immediately return Seak (Johnny) Sorn to his family and not proceed with deportation.

Section 2. That the Clerk of Council is directed to transmit a copy of this resolution to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services.

Section 3. That this resolution is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and, provided it receives the affirmative vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to Council, it shall take effect and be in force immediately upon its adoption and approval by the Mayor; otherwise it shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.

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READ FIRST TIME

REPORTS

and referred to

READ FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD TIME

CITY CLERK

READ SECOND TIME

CITY CLERK

READ THIRD TIME on NOVEMBER 4, 2020

PRESIDENT

CITY CLERK

APPROVED

MAYOR