

Department of Finance Legislative Summary

ORDINANCE NO.: 411-2024

DESCRIPTION: HIAS (formerly the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) is “the Jewish humanitarian organization that provides critical services to refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced people in 23 countries around the world.” It is the oldest refugee resettlement organization in the world and has had a presence in Cleveland for almost 100 years. It works with people from all backgrounds who are specifically selected and supported by the State Department to come to the United States, and these refugees enter the United States with full legal status.

In July 2024, HIAS announced that the May Dugan Center (MDC) would be its new affiliate in Cleveland. HIAS had lost its former local affiliate in 2023, and with the strong and concerted support of Global Cleveland and other community partners, May Dugan stepped up to lead this work at a tumultuous time. Had it not done so, Cleveland would have lost one-third of its refugee flows.

MDC welcomed its first new families in September of 2023. It is expected to resettle 200 people in 2024 during this ramp-up period. Once at full capacity, it will receive up to 500 people to Cleveland each year. Specifically, the May Dugan team assists people from the time they arrive at the airport through their first 90 days in Cleveland. For example, they help secure housing, obtain food and household items, enroll in schools and English classes, find employment, and otherwise integrate into the United States.

Securing the role of MDC here in Cleveland required \$450,000 in start-up funding to achieve the economies of scale necessary for MDC’s refugee work to sustain itself. Several organizations have pledged to fill this gap. The contributing partners to this effort include Cuyahoga County, the Cleveland Foundation, the Glick Family Foundation, the Gund Foundation, the Mandel Foundation, the Mt. Sinai Foundation, and Global Cleveland.

The City has the opportunity to support this effort and secure the provision of essential services for the newest Clevelanders by entering into the proposed \$50,000 agreement with MDC. This will act as the final one-time funds necessary for MDC's work with HIAS, while supporting the continued growth and vitality of Cleveland's immigrant ecosystem.