

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Franklin County Commissioners to Host New American Forum

The Franklin County Commissioners, along with the New American Advisory Council (NAAC), will host the 2017 New American Forum on Wednesday, May 10, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The event will foster dialogue and familiarity on the challenges and opportunities facing Franklin County's immigrant community, while raising awareness and promoting integration through community engagement.



Following an Emergency Meeting on February 3, which was called in response to presidential executive orders banning the citizens of seven majority Muslim countries from entering the United States and suspending the U.S. refugee program, the NAAC has been meeting weekly to discuss issues facing New Americans, and to plan the New Americans Forum to be held at the Columbus Athenaeum, 32 North 4th Street.

“Franklin County is home to roughly a quarter of Ohio’s New American population, according to the American Immigration Council, which significantly contributes to our political, economic and cultural landscape,” said Commissioner Kevin L. Boyce. “It would be a disservice to the county as a whole to not recognize and address the challenges and issues that are unique to this community. In light of the recent actions taken by the White House, it is clear that we as a community must stand together in ensuring that every member of our community has a fair and equal opportunity.”

The NAAC was originally convened last year by then-State Representative and now-Commissioner Boyce to discuss ways our government could help our newest Americans integrate into society. On February 14, 2017, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution formally establishing a New American Advisory Council (NAAC) to identify challenges and barriers within the New American community and build a platform that promotes inclusivity in Franklin County.

“I am proud of the diverse and welcoming community that we have here in Franklin County,” said Commissioner John O’Grady. “I’d like to thank Commissioner Boyce for bringing this initiative to the forefront, the Advisory Council for their work, and I look forward to hearing about the robust dialogue sure to take place at the Forum and going forward.”

“Our growing New American population is part of what makes Franklin County such a vibrant community. They enrich our neighborhoods by sharing their culture, their cuisine and art with us, and by starting an outsized share of new businesses,” said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. “Our new neighbors also contribute greatly to our economy, supporting an estimated 21,000 jobs, and contributing \$258 million in local and state income, property and sales tax.”

Nadia Kasvin is the Co-Founder and Director of US Together, a refugee resettlement agency. On April 18, she was appointed as the Chair of NAAC. She said, “I came to this country as a refugee more than 20 years ago and dedicated my life to help refugees and immigrants be successful in our new country. It required addressing many challenges that face newcomers to this country, but sometimes our greatest hurdle is changing attitudes toward the people we serve. Many have never met someone born in another country; they may not know our plight, our hard work ethics, our family story, our journey or our struggle to succeed in our new country. We want to share our stories and invite communities that welcomed us and provided us with so many opportunities to come and meet us. We are more alike than different.”

Dr. Frederic Bertley, President and CEO of the Center of Science and Industry (COSI), will be featured as this year’s keynote speaker. Dr. Bertley is a nationally renowned thought leader in the fields of applied science, education and community engagement, and has worked internationally in preventative medicine in several countries including Haiti, Egypt, Peru, The Sudan and the Canadian Arctic.

The event will also feature a panel on business development, as well as remarks from other elected officials.

NOTE: This event is open to the general public. [Click here](#) to reserve tickets.

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