By Supervisor Martin File No. 20-506

**A RESOLUTION**

Authorizing and requesting the Office of Government Affairs convey Milwaukee County’s opposition to the deportation of United States Hmong and Laotian residents

WHEREAS, the United States Census Bureau reports there are approximately 260,073 Hmong residents and 232,130 Laotian residents in the United States while Wisconsin is home to more than 49,000 Hmong residents and 4,500 Laotian residents; and

WHEREAS, on June 18, 2019, President Trump announced that the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Agency would begin mass deportation of immigrants; and

WHEREAS, in January 2020, the U.S. Secretary of State met with the Laotian Foreign Minster to discuss whether the Lao People’s Democratic Republic would accept Hmong and Laotian residents deported from the United States; and

WHEREAS, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, the latter of which the United States has acceded to, in Article 33 declares, “No Contracting State shall expel or return (“refouler”) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers or territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion”; and

WHEREAS, any deportation of Hmong and Laotian residents would be detrimental to their welfare and safety as they could possibly encounter physical, emotional and mental abuse; and

WHEREAS, deportation would tear families apart and subject them to poverty; and

WHEREAS, the Laos 2018 Human Rights Report indicated that police and security officials committed several human rights violations and were not reprimanded or prosecuted by the government; and

WHEREAS, Hmong and Laotian residents who are not United States citizens and have criminal records or under deportation orders could face potential deportation to Laos including those who are green card holders as reported by Wisconsin Public Radio; and

WHEREAS, Fox6 News confirms that a spokesperson for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE), explains as of February 1, 2020 there were 38 Laotian Nationals in ICE custody with final orders for removal and all of them have criminal convictions; and

WHEREAS, ICE further indicated there are another 4,716 Laotian Nationals who have final orders for removal who are not yet in ICE custody and, of those, 4,086 have criminal convictions; and

WHEREAS, the Director of the Hmong American Center in Wausau, Wisconsin, estimates close to 360 residents of Wisconsin and Illinois could be at risk for deportation and maybe more, as there is no statute of limitations on crimes which make someone deportable; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Representative Betty McCollum of Minnesota penned a letter on February 3, 2020 to the U.S. Secretary of the State expressing opposition to the deportation of Hmong and Laotian residents arguing “it is unconscionable to deport individuals to any country in which the U.S. knowingly puts them at risk and to take such action is itself human rights abuse”; and

WHEREAS, on February 13, 2020, the Governor of Wisconsin wrote to the U.S. Secretary of State expressing opposition to the deportation of Wisconsin’s Hmong residents and to reconsider any negotiations that would result in deportation; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin and U.S. Representatives Gwen Moore and Mark Pocan wrote a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State on February 14, 2020 to express concern over previous human rights violations in Laos and noted that residents of Wisconsin share a strong bond with the Hmong community; and

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic on March 10, 2020, shortly thereafter, on March 18, 2020 the Department of Justice (DOJ) closed several immigration courts for the protection and safety of immigration lawyers, judges, prosecutors, staff and immigrants; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 resulted in several immigration changes administrated by the Trump Administration which included postponing immigration hearings, halting of deportations flights to certain countries, removal of migrants arrested at the border and suspension of refugee admissions into the country; and

WHEREAS, any deportation of Hmong and Laotian residents living in the United States would be detrimental to families, as many residents facing deportation are parents, grandparents, business owners, taxpayers and good law-abiding residents of society; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby opposes any deportation of Hmong and Laotian residents from the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby requests Government Affairs staff communicate the County’s opposition to the U.S. Secretary of State and Wisconsin Congressional Delegation.