

Needham Area Immigration Justice Task Force Year in Review 2025-2026

Partnership with Metrowest Worker Center - Casa

Our members remain deeply involved in community-based support efforts through our ongoing partnership with Casa. Activities this year included:

- Provided accompaniment and transportation to ICE offices, medical appointments, court hearings, and other essential services.
- Supported weekly food distribution efforts that now serve nearly 1,000 families each month in Framingham and Milford.
- Attended bi-weekly Casa Allies meetings to stay informed about developments on the ground, advocacy opportunities, and the evolving needs of our immigrant neighbors.
- Continued leadership engagement through two members of the NAIJTF Steering Committee serving on the Casa Allies Coordinating Committee.
- Coordinated eight local Casa Allies fundraisers totaling \$48,000
- Worked with the Casa Grants Team to submit two grant applications.

Education & Empowerment

Throughout the year, NAIJTF hosted educational programs and community forums designed to inform, empower, and mobilize our community.

- John and Carol Devendorf, Milford organizers and LUCE-trained verifiers, shared their experiences and community responses following the detention of a student athlete in May 2025 and the continued ICE presence in Milford.
- Judy Wolberg of the Boston Immigration Justice Accompaniment Network (BIJAN) and the Beyond Bond & Legal Defense Fund (BBLDF) provided an update on the critical work of their all-volunteer organizations supporting detained immigrants.
- Heidi Frail, Needham Select Board, Chair, presented on the Neighborhood Housing Plan
- Al Green, Director of the LGBT Asylum Task Force in Worcester presented on the intersection of immigration and LGBTQ+ Communities entitled *Beyond Borders: Solidarity and Justice for LGBT Asylum Seekers*.
- Cari Cornish, Pro Bono Immigration Attorney, presented a legal update entitled *Caught in the Crackdown: A look at this administration's tactics*.
- Heather Yountz, Immigration Attorney entitled *One Year In: The Trump administration's impact on immigrants in Massachusetts*, examined the changing immigration landscape and its local impact, in collaboration with the Needham Human Rights Committee
- ACLU of Massachusetts *Active Bystander Training*, to stand up for and protect our neighbors. Partnered with Progressive Needham.
- LUCE Immigrant Justice Network of MA training, to strengthen community preparedness and response.

- Select Board Member Cathy Dowd provided an overview of the process and key details of Needham's new policy on immigration and police practices.

Community Partnerships & Events

NAIJTF continued to strengthen relationships with local organizations and community stakeholders through advocacy, education, and fundraising efforts.

- Participated as a Harvest Fair exhibitor alongside the League of Women Voters explaining the mission and role of NAIJTF, and the *Defenders of Justice: A gratitude project*, collecting and sharing messages of appreciation with immigration attorneys defending immigrant communities.
- Partnered with the Needham Housing Coalition to support expanded housing opportunities in Needham and advance a healthy, welcoming community with a broader range of housing options.
- Sponsored LGBT Asylum Task Force Annual Gala 2025: *Stand Up Now* in Worcester, supporting advocacy and resources for LGBTQ+ individuals seeking asylum.
- Supported the Needham Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC) Documentary Series, fostering dialogue and awareness around domestic violence prevention and education.
- Co-hosted an America@250 program focused on *The New Colossus*. Emma Lazarus was a 19th century Jewish American writer whose poem "The New Colossus," engraved on Statue of Liberty's platform, welcomes immigrants as they enter the United States.
- Organized Needham's *Notes of Hope* music trivia fundraiser for Casa, raising more than \$17,000 to support immigrant neighbors facing food and housing insecurity, legal expenses, and healthcare costs.

Legislative Advocacy & Policy Support

NAIJTF supported key legislation aligned with equity, worker protections, and immigrant rights, including. Submitted testimony to legislative committees in support of

- Protect Act
- Immigrant Legal Defense Fund
- Detention Not Deportation
- Cover All Kids
- Protect Injured Workers
- The Safe Communities Act.

Need Shelter Network: A project of NAIJTF

Family from Haiti

- The mother continues to await reinstatement of her work authorization. Amid ongoing immigration policy changes, her asylum case is being closely monitored.

- The family is still in Worcester; however, delays in work reauthorization, limited HomeBASE funds, and rising food prices are contributing to increasing financial strain. Positive update, daughter to attend Head Start this fall.

Family from Guatemala

- The young worker continues to balance recovery and resilience following a workplace injury and has recently undergone his ninth surgery.
- On a happier note, the family welcomed a healthy baby boy at the end of May with the arrival of the young worker's nephew.

Looking Ahead

The Task Force will continue to advocate for just policies, educating and empowering the community, and expanding opportunities to support our immigrant neighbors.

At this moment in our country, silence is complicity. Members participated in local standouts and protests, including No Kings Day, Framingham ISAP and Burlington ICE standouts, and meetings with local legislators to advocate for respectful and humane immigration policies.

We remain committed to building a welcoming community where *all* people are treated with dignity, compassion, and justice.

Visit our website www.immigrationneedham and our Facebook Page.