



MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF FRANCIS ANWANA

Whereas, Francis Anwana (“Mr. Anwana”) was born in Nigeria 48 years ago, and

Whereas, Mr. Anwana was born deaf and with cognitive impairments, and

Whereas, finding that there were no programs for the deaf in Nigeria and observing that his son was being subjected to harassment because of his disabilities, Mr. Anwana’s father first brought his son to the United States at age 13, and

Whereas, growing up, Mr. Anwana attended the Lutheran School for the Deaf in Michigan, and later the Michigan School for the Deaf, where he learned American Sign Language, which remains his only effective means of communication, and

Whereas, after Mr. Anwana’s father passed away in 2012, he continued to live in supportive living situations as he had previous to that time. At no time has he hidden or tried to evade authorities and he has reported regularly to immigration officials as required, and

Whereas, due to Mr. Anwana’s disabilities, he lacks understanding of the concept of immigration status and his advocates and caregivers were unable to secure stable, permanent immigration status for him when his student status ended, and

Whereas, Mr. Anwana’s advocates have continued to attempt to obtain necessary documents permitting him to remain in this country, those efforts have not yet been successful. Still, Mr. Anwana has fully cooperated by making annual appearances before immigration officials, and

Whereas, Mr. Anwana voluntarily appeared at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices when summoned by letter on September 6, 2018, and was informed that he was to return in five days to be deported, and

Whereas, ICE officials recently granted a stay of removal of Mr. Anwana for a period of twelve (12) months in light of the extenuating circumstances, and

Whereas, it appears Mr. Anwana, who has cognitive difficulty understanding the full complexity and seriousness of his situation under the best of circumstances, has (likely in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act) not been provided by the government with a certified interpreter when meeting with ICE officials and answering questions or being provided instruction, and has instead been required to “bring his own” interpreter, and

Whereas, deporting Mr. Anwana to Nigeria would almost certainly have catastrophic consequences for him as his only means of communication is in American Sign Language. Further, his cognitive challenges not only make acquiring a new language (Nigerian Sign Language) exceptionally problematic, they render him unable to fully understand the implications of being relocated, and incapable of providing the necessities for a new life in what to him is a foreign country, and

Whereas, the State Department issued in early 2018 a travel advisory (the third of four levels) to Nigeria and deporting Mr. Anwana to Nigeria will expose Mr. Anwana to serious physical danger such as assault, rape, kidnapping, terrorism and piracy.

It Is Therefore Resolved, that the Michigan Civil Rights Commission calls upon officials at every level of state and federal government to recognize the unique situation presented by Mr. Anwana’s deafness, his cognitive disability, and his lack of personal responsibility for the failure to properly renew his documentation, and take all actions necessary to permit Mr. Anwana to remain permanently in Michigan and live his life free from the dangers to his health, safety and well-being that would be presented by a forced relocation to a country he does not know and that the United States Department of State considers to present serious risks to personal safety and security.



Passed unanimously on the 8th day of October, 2018, by the
MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mumtaz Haque, Co-Chair
Rasha Demashkieh, Secretary
Ira Combs
Ricardo Resio

Laura Reyes-Kopack, Co-Chair
Stacie Clayton
Jeffrey Sakwa
Alma Wheeler Smith