

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
www.labor.hawaii.gov

ANNE PERREIRA-EUSTAQUIO
DIRECTOR

JOANN A. VIDINHAR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

March 22, 2022

To: The Honorable Richard H.K. Onishi, Chair,
The Honorable Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Labor & Tourism

Date: Tuesday, March 22, 2022
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Place: Via Videoconference, State Capitol

From: Anne Perreira-Eustaquio, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: S.B. 2457 SD1 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTERS

The department supports this measure, provided it does not conflict with the priorities identified in the Governor's Supplemental Budget request, that appropriates funding to the DLIR's Office of Community Services (OCS) to fund Immigrant Resource Centers. The DLIR values the OCS's critical work and appreciates the appropriation that will enable them to continue to serve low-income individuals, immigrants and refugees.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**

P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & TOURISM
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 2457, S.D. 1

**March 22, 2022
9:00 a.m.
Room 312 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTERS

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on Senate Bill (S.B.) No. 2457, S.D. 1.

S.B. No. 2457, S.D. 1, appropriates unspecified general funds in FY 23 to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Office of Community Services, to restore funding for Immigrant Resource Centers for the purpose of providing staff and resources to assist immigrant and refugee populations throughout the State.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and

- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

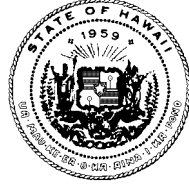
Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 20, 2022

TO: The Honorable Representative Richard H.K. Onishi, Chair
House Committee on Labor & Tourism

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2457 SD1 – RELATING TO IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTERS.**

Hearing: March 22, 2022, 9:00 a.m.
Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure and defers to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) and the DLIR Office of Community Services (OCS).

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to appropriate moneys to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Office of Community Services to restore funding for immigrant resource centers. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1) The SD1 defected the effective date and made technical amendments.

Immigrants in Hawaii are vital members of the community and the workforce. No matter the reason for immigration, many immigrants faced hardships in their home countries to come to the United States to pursue their dreams and a better life for themselves and their families. Many immigrants have limited English proficiency (LEP), and seeking information and resources in English is not easy. Though DHS is working to improve access to its services, navigating government services and programs remains cumbersome for U.S. citizens and can be more difficult for those born and raised abroad.

Restoring funds for immigrant resource centers will support immigrant and refugee populations transitioning to life in the United States. For long-term immigrant residents, resource centers will help individuals access new information such as available pandemic resources, other new opportunities, or other program changes. The Department also encourages DLIR OCS to consider serving Hawaii's migrant populations. Importantly, having trustworthy immigrant resource centers may also prevent harm perpetrated by the unfortunate elements of society who prey on vulnerable individuals and immigrants.

If the measure passes, DHS will collaborate with DLIR OCS to assist immigrant and migrant individuals and families in accessing available public benefits and services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



ANNE E. PERREIRA-EUSTAQUIO
DIRECTOR

JOANN A. VIDINHAR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

JOVANIA DOMINGO DELA CRUZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

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Phone: (808) 586-8675 / Fax: (808) 586-8685
Email: dlir.ocs@hawaii.gov

IN REPLY, REFER TO:
OCS 22.1072

March 18, 2022

To: The Honorable Richard H.K. Onishi, Chair,
The Honorable Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Labor & Tourism

Date: Tuesday, March 22, 2022

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Place: Conference Room 312, State Capitol & Videoconference

From: Jovania Domingo Dela Cruz, Executive Director
DLIR – Office of Community Services

Position: Strong Support

Re: S.B. 2457, SD 1 – RELATING TO IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTERS

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

S.B. 2457, SD 1 would appropriate an unspecified sum to the Office of Community Services (OCS), an agency administratively attached to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, to reestablish Immigrant Resource Centers to address the specific needs of the low-income immigrant population in the State.

II. CURRENT LAW

Currently, there are no appropriations for Immigrant Resource Centers, and OCS does not operate any at present.

III. COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION

OCS is pleased to support this bill. OCS maintained Immigrant Resource Centers (IRCs) in all four counties to provide support services for low-income immigrants from state fiscal years 2014 to 2017. They were funded by State funds at a level of \$700,000 per year.

Besides providing services at the Centers, OCS also had prepared a Hawaii Handbook for Immigrants, which OCS had translated into Ilocano, Chuukese, and Marshallese, and printed and published in English and those languages. The printed copies of the Handbook have all been distributed, but electronic copies in all four languages remain available on the OCS website, <https://labor.hawaii.gov/ocs/>.

OCS would like very much to revive the IRCs. We believe we could make them effective and cost-efficient sources of information and assistance for Hawaii’s immigrants.

Hawaii’s Immigrant Population – Their Strengths and Their Needs

Last year, the Legislature passed HCR 169, to create a Working Group to make recommendations to improve access to government services for immigrants and increase immigrant opportunities to make civic and economic contributions to the community.

The Working Group sent its Report to the Legislature in December 2021. It is available as Dept. Comm. No. 110. The Working Group heavily emphasized the need for a formal Needs Assessment to accurately learn from immigrants themselves what they need from the State, but the Working Group stated, “Currently, there is a lack of resources required to conduct such an assessment.” The Working Group further noted that “A community needs assessment could identify the utility of establishing one-stop centers, websites, and re-establishing Immigrant Resource Centers across the state.” See Report at page 9.

The Working Group reported that, on a per-capita basis, Hawaii has an extremely large immigrant population, compared to other States. According to the 2020 Census, about 270,000 Hawaii residents, who constitute about 18.5% of Hawaii’s total population, are foreign-born. The Report also noted that Hawaii’s immigrants are more likely to be low-income than native-born, immigrants are less likely to have health insurance, but (per 2018 statistics) they generate some \$17.6 billion toward Hawaii’s economy, paying \$1.55 billion in federal taxes and over \$874 million in Hawaii State and county taxes. They contributed \$780 million to the Social Security system and \$195 million to Medicare in 2018, more than 18% of the total contributions to Social Security and Medicare of the entire State population. Hawaii’s immigrants make up 40% of our agricultural workers and 33% of our workers in the tourism, entertainment, and hospitality. See Report at page 3.

These statistics show clearly that Hawaii’s immigrants are hard-working but still needing support in key areas. It is essential for the well-being of the entire population of Hawaii that new immigrants be assimilated into our society as quickly and with as few crises as reasonably possible. Uppermost in this process are the needs for immigrant children to do well in school, for adults to find employment, and for all of them to be well informed about social services and other resources.

Immigrant families tend to face major cultural challenges everywhere – in housing, employment, consumer matters, access to medical services, the criminal justice system, education, and elsewhere. The IRCs were intended to provide new immigrants with the information and basic skills to avoid the most serious pitfalls.

The Services That Our Immigrant Resource Centers Provided

During the time that the Immigrant Resource Centers existed, IRC service providers actively reached out into the immigrant communities, making immigrants aware of the services that are available to them at all levels of government and in the private sector. This included making immigrants aware that the IRCs are there to help new immigrants "navigate the system" of services.

The IRCs also were intended to provide individualized case management for individuals and families with serious unmet needs, providing family-based support, solution-based counseling, acculturation information and referrals when appropriate.

These IRCs were intended to meet what OCS believes is a strong demand for a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to help new immigrants gain access to health, social, employment and educational services.

For these multiple reasons, OCS believes that the IRCs should be revived and given a new opportunity to meet these needs, which are especially critical during the continuing Covid pandemic emergency.



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Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2457 SD1 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTERS

COMMITTEE ON LABOR & TOURISM

Rep. Richard H.K. Onishi, Chair

Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: 3/22/2022

Dear Committee Members,

We write to SUPPORT SB2457 SD1, which appropriates money to the Office of Community Services (OCS) to restore funding for immigrant resource centers for the purpose of providing staff and resources to assist immigrant and refugee populations throughout the State.

There are Barriers to Access for Immigrants.

There are many barriers to access for immigrants and refugees in Hawai`i. The COVID-19 pandemic emergency revealed the current gaps in the ability of all agencies to provide meaningful access to immigrants. For example, it is well documented that state agencies were unable to properly serve LEP communities during the pandemic.¹

Although the COVID-19 emergency exposed these challenges with greater clarity, they have long been a concern. Hawai`i has been cited repeatedly by the federal Department of Justice and the federal court for failure to ensure meaningful access to services by LEP persons.²

In addition to language access, the myriad of federal immigration statuses and documents has created confusion employees and systems, leading to further barriers for immigrants. For example, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there initially was a barrier to COFA-status immigrants accessing Unemployment Insurance because the computer system did not

¹ See, e.g., Anita Hofschneider, *Advocates: Lack of Interpreter Services at Unemployment Office is Illegal*, Civil Beat, July 7, 2020, at <https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/07/advocates-lack-of-interpreter-services-at-unemployment-office-is-illegal/>.

² Hawai`i Department of Human Services, Consent Decree (2008); Hawai`i Office of Elections, United States District Court for the District of Hawai`i, Settlement Agreement (2010); Hawai`i Department of Transportation, FACE v. DOT, United States District Court for the District of Hawai`i Settlement Agreement (2015); Hawai`i Judiciary, Technical Assistance Agreement (2015); Hawai`i Public Housing Authority, Settlement Agreement with the Hawai`i Civil Rights Commission (2016). Additionally, multiple language access complaints were filed in 2020 against the Hawai`i Department of Labor and Industrial Relations Unemployment Insurance Division for its failure to translate vital documents, including applications for Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), and its failure to provide interpreters. These complaints remain pending with the federal Department of Labor, Civil Rights Division.



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allow for I-94 numbers.³ And finally, many groups of immigrants continue to face discrimination here in Hawai`i.⁴

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have heard numerous stories of immigrant families unable to access benefits and services that they were entitled to and, just like all working Hawai`i residents, had paid into. Among Hawai`i's working population during the 2012-2016 period, 22% were born in foreign countries. Almost one fourth of foreign-born workers were found in Accommodation and Food Services (22.5%), followed by Retail Trade (12.8%,) and Health Care and Social Assistance (11.8%).⁵ Moreover, in Hawai`i's labor force, 37% of all workers, 25 years and older, speak a language other than English at home.⁶

With the proper resources to lower barriers, refugees and immigrants would have opportunities to contribute even more. Overall the state must do better for its immigrant residents.

Office of Community Services Should Provide Immigrant Resource Centers.

This bill is an important step to addressing this problem, as immigrant resource centers can properly connect refugees and immigrants to needed services, benefits, and opportunities. The Office of Community Services (OCS), an administratively-attached agency to DLIR, was established by the Legislature in 1985 to assist low-income individuals and families, refugees, and immigrants so they can live healthier lives, achieve greater economic self-sufficiency, and increase their contributions to the state.

Although OCS's focus and funding for immigrant and refugee communities has eroded over time, OCS's current primary focus and funds are for low-income communities. OCS is responsible for numerous statewide programs and provides millions of federal and state dollars to low-income communities for food, health services, employment services, and more.⁷ OCS's

³ Anita Hofschneider, *Hawaii Updates Unemployment Application to Include Pacific Migrants*, Civil Beat, April 14, 2020, at <https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/04/hawaii-updates-unemployment-application-to-include-pacific-migrants/>.

⁴ Anita Hofschneider, *Report: Battling Discrimination Against Micronesians Requires Policy Changes*, Civil Beat, October 15, 2019, <https://www.civilbeat.org/2019/10/report-battling-discrimination-against-micronesians-requires-policy-changes/>

⁵ Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, *Hawai`i's Working Population: An Analysis by Industry 2012-2016*, (April 2018).

⁶ Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, *The State of Hawai`i Data Book 2018*, Table 1.45 – Language Spoken at Home, by Educational Attainment and Employment Status: 2013-2017 (2018).

⁷ Here are just a few examples of OCS's staff portfolio:

Federal Food Programs. OCS works with the Hawai`i Foodbank, Maui Food Bank, the Food Basket, and others. OCS facilitates the delivery of free USDA food to hundreds of thousands of Hawai`i residents through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and through two other federal food programs – the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.



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history, legislative purpose, and current responsibilities make it well positioned to implement the much-needed Immigrant Resource Centers for the state.

As we head into the next chapter of the fight to end COVID-19 and recover economically, we will only be successful if services and opportunities include *all* of Hawai`i's residents, including immigrants. This bill is an important step for that goal.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Catherine Chen, Co-chair, Hawai`i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

Liza Ryan Gill, Co-chair, Hawai`i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

State-funded programs. In Fiscal Year 2020 OCS managed a portfolio of 92 state grants-in-aid totaling more than \$25.6 million, of which approximately \$23.8 million was for capital improvement projects and \$1.8 million was for operating grants. OCS also administers a state-funded employment services program that helps Hawai`i's low-income individuals and legal permanent residents gain employment skills, find, and retain jobs.

COVID-19 programs. OCS's existing federally funded programs received direct funding from the CARES Act. In addition, OCS administered CARES Act funds (appropriated from the Legislature) for food distribution. OCS staff are experienced and needed by the state to administer essential programs aimed to provide a social safety net to low-income, vulnerable, and disadvantaged communities during the COVID-19.

SB-2457-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2022 1:47:49 PM

Testimony for LAT on 3/22/2022 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Testimony in support of SB 2457

RELATINNG TO IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTERS

Submitted by Hawai`i Friends of Civil Rights,

Co-chairs: Amy Agbayani and Pat McManama We strongly support SB 2457 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTERS which was included in HCR 169 (approved in 2021). HCR 169 and SB 2457 are supported by the Filipino Legislative Caucus. It should be noted that nearly half of all immigrants to Hawai'i are from the Philippines (46%); Japan (8%), China (8%), Korea (7%), Micronesia (5%), Vietnam (4%), Mexico (2%), Canada (1.5%), and Hong Kong (1.5%). Fifty-seven percent of Hawaii's immigrants are naturalized US citizens and many have US born children.

We thank the legislature for passing HCR 169 requesting DLIR to organize a working group comprised of state offices and immigrant serving organizations to submit a report to the 2022 legislature identifying barriers and recommendations "to improve access to government services for immigrants and increase immigrant opportunities to make civic and economic contributions to the community." I was co-chair with DLIR director for the HCR 169 working group.

HCR 169 and SB 2457 provide some important information about the state's foreign born community and barriers they face: (A) there are over 250,000 foreign born persons in the state; including 145,000 who are naturalized citizens; their participation in Hawaii's economy (40% of agricultural workers, 33% of tourism/hospitality workers and 23% of healthcare workers; B) barriers many immigrants face include discrimination, cultural misunderstanding, language access to government information and services.

We thank the legislature for establishing the Office of Community Service (OCS) in 1985 by consolidating “four anti-poverty agencies administering state and federal fund and its mission to serve low-income communities, immigrants and refugees. HB 1760 noted that OCS funds for immigrants has been reduced eg. \$700,000 OCS funds for immigrant resource centers has not been available for years. HB 1760 appropriation request is to re-institute funding for Immigrant Resource Centers to provide needed services to immigrants (e.g. orientation, assistance with immigration forms, referrals to government services. Funding for non-profit organizations who have experience working with low-income immigrant limited English speaking persons are needed and will benefit not only immigrants but also our state.

We support SB 2457 to fund and re-instate immigrant resource centers and a staff position. This funding will allow immigrant serving community agencies and OCS address needs of our immigrant communities and will help OCS meet its legislative mandate to serve low-income individuals, immigrants and refugees.

We respectfully urge your support for SB 2457

Amy Agbayani and Pat McManaman, co-chairs

Hawai`i Friends of Civil Service



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TO: Rep. Richard H.K. Onishi, Chair
Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair
Committee on Labor & Tourism

FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO

DATE: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 (Via Videoconference, Conference Rm. 312)

RE: **IN SUPPORT OF SB 2457, SD1, Relating to Immigrant Resource Centers**

CCH supports SB 2457, SD1, which would restore funding for Immigrant Resource Centers.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been serving people in need in the State of Hawaii since 1947. Our agency serves limited English proficient clients across all of our 40+ programs and provides legal immigration services for low-income immigrants, refugees and migrants on Oahu and Hawaii Island.

Restoring funding for Immigrant Resource Centers will provide needed access to information, services, resources and other support for immigrants, refugees and migrants throughout the State. The pandemic has made it evident that there are multiple barriers to access, particularly for low-income immigrants, refugees and migrants. Language/communication, technology literacy and understanding of bureaucratic systems are all challenges that must be learned in order to participate fully in our society. Immigrants, refugees and migrants need help along their journey of becoming fully participatory, self-sustaining members of our community. Immigrant Resource Centers can be safe places where they can receive that help.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i asks for your support of SB 2457, SD1, to ensure equal access for all.

For more information or questions, please feel free to email Diane Terada, Division Administrator, at diane.terada@catholiccharitieshawaii.org or call her via phone at (808) 527-4702.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.





AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

OFFICERS	DIRECTORS	MAILING ADDRESS		
John Bickel, President	Melodie Aduja	Jan Lubin	Bill South	P.O. Box 23404
Alan Burdick, Vice President	Keola Akana	John Miller	Zahava Zaidoff	Honolulu
Dave Nagajji, Treasurer	Juliet Begley	Jenny Nomura		Hawaii 96823
Doug Pyle, Secretary	Stephanie Fitzpatrick	Stephen O'Harrow		

March 19, 2022

TO: Chair Onishi and Members of the Committee

RE: SB 2457 SD1 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTERS.

Support for hearing on March 22

Americans for Democratic Action is an organization founded in the 1950s by leading supporters of the New Deal and led by Patsy Mink in the 1970s. We are devoted to the promotion of progressive public policies.

We support this bill as we support restoring funding for Office of Community Services for immigrant resource centers. (IRCs)

Hawaii has one of the highest percentages of immigrants as a proportion of the State's total population. Many come unprepared and, even if they think they are prepared, often find themselves bewildered or confronted with unexpected barriers and challenges. If they don't have a strong social network nearby, they can quickly become dependent and despondent.

They need a place where they can get reliable information about responsibilities and rights as tenants, parents of children in schools, and patients using medical insurance programs

The Office of Community Services had IRCs for four years--2013 to 2017 approximately. These centers assisted new immigrants in learning US and Hawaii laws and culture. Everything from domestic relations law, landlord-tenant, how to find a job and keep it, awareness of income taxation, how to get medical insurance and care, how to enroll children in school and ensure that your child is properly treated, driver's licensing, etc.

Immigrants still need these services and OCS is ready to revive them. We just need the funding.

Thank you for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

John Bickel, President



March 20, 2022

COMMITTEE ON LABOR & TOURISM
Rep. Richard H.K. Onishi, Chair
Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair

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Hearing Date: March 22, 2022, 9:00 a.m.
Via Videoconference; Conference Room 312

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2457, Senate Draft 1, Relating to Immigrant Resource Centers

Chair Onishi, Vice-Chair Sayama, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic (“TLC”) submits this testimony in support of SB 2457, SD 1, which would appropriate moneys to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Office of Community Services, to restore funding for immigrant resource centers.

TLC provides legal and related services to Hawai'i's low- and moderate-income immigrant community. In the course of our work, we have seen that the needs of the State's growing immigrant community have been sorely neglected.

According to the 2020 Census, immigrants (those born outside the United States) make up 19.3% of our population (273,012 of our residents). This is compared to 13.7% of the U.S. population. Moreover, of our foreign-born population, over 41% (112,050) have not naturalized and become U.S. citizens. Hawai'i is also home to another migrant community in need of services, that being the residents from the states comprising the Compact of Free Association (“COFA”) – the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Palau. These residents are entitled to migrate to the U.S. under the Compact, which has its origins in the United States' use of these countries for nuclear testing and other military purposes. It is estimated that there are approximately 18,500 COFA residents in Hawai'i, and that they are believed to make up the fastest growing portion of our migrant community.

The Covid-19 pandemic has hit the low-income immigrant community particularly hard. They are disproportionately impacted by the loss of jobs, lower rates of health care coverage, higher rates of Covid-19 infection, and less access to unemployment insurance and other public benefits due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with the system.

Passage of SB 2457, SD 1, will provide a step forward in aiding these communities by increasing the delivery of services to them. We urge you to pass SB 2457, SD 1, out of committee.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corey Park". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Corey Park
President, Board of Directors
The Legal Clinic



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hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2457 SD1 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTERS

COMMITTEE ON LABOR & TOURISM

Rep. Richard H.K. Onishi, Chair

Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: 3/22/2022

Dear Committee Members,

We write to SUPPORT SB2457 SD1, which appropriates money to the Office of Community Services (OCS) to restore funding for immigrant resource centers for the purpose of providing staff and resources to assist immigrant and refugee populations throughout the State.

There are Barriers to Access for Immigrants.

There are many barriers to access for immigrants and refugees in Hawai`i. The COVID-19 pandemic emergency revealed the current gaps in the ability of all agencies to provide meaningful access to immigrants. For example, it is well documented that state agencies were unable to properly serve LEP communities during the pandemic.¹

Although the COVID-19 emergency exposed these challenges with greater clarity, they have long been a concern. Hawai`i has been cited repeatedly by the federal Department of Justice and the federal court for failure to ensure meaningful access to services by LEP persons.²

In addition to language access, the myriad of federal immigration statuses and documents has created confusion employees and systems, leading to further barriers for immigrants. For example, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there initially was a barrier to COFA-status immigrants accessing Unemployment Insurance because the computer system did not

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² Hawai`i Department of Human Services, Consent Decree (2008); Hawai`i Office of Elections, United States District Court for the District of Hawai`i, Settlement Agreement (2010); Hawai`i Department of Transportation, FACE v. DOT, United States District Court for the District of Hawai`i Settlement Agreement (2015); Hawai`i Judiciary, Technical Assistance Agreement (2015); Hawai`i Public Housing Authority, Settlement Agreement with the Hawai`i Civil Rights Commission (2016). Additionally, multiple language access complaints were filed in 2020 against the Hawai`i Department of Labor and Industrial Relations Unemployment Insurance Division for its failure to translate vital documents, including applications for Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), and its failure to provide interpreters. These complaints remain pending with the federal Department of Labor, Civil Rights Division.



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allow for I-94 numbers.³ And finally, many groups of immigrants continue to face discrimination here in Hawai`i.⁴

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have heard numerous stories of immigrant families unable to access benefits and services that they were entitled to and, just like all working Hawai`i residents, had paid into. Among Hawai`i's working population during the 2012-2016 period, 22% were born in foreign countries. Almost one fourth of foreign-born workers were found in Accommodation and Food Services (22.5%), followed by Retail Trade (12.8%,) and Health Care and Social Assistance (11.8%).⁵ Moreover, in Hawai`i's labor force, 37% of all workers, 25 years and older, speak a language other than English at home.⁶

With the proper resources to lower barriers, refugees and immigrants would have opportunities to contribute even more. Overall the state must do better for its immigrant residents.

Office of Community Services Should Provide Immigrant Resource Centers.

This bill is an important step to addressing this problem, as immigrant resource centers can properly connect refugees and immigrants to needed services, benefits, and opportunities. The Office of Community Services (OCS), an administratively-attached agency to DLIR, was established by the Legislature in 1985 to assist low-income individuals and families, refugees, and immigrants so they can live healthier lives, achieve greater economic self-sufficiency, and increase their contributions to the state.

Although OCS's focus and funding for immigrant and refugee communities has eroded over time, OCS's current primary focus and funds are for low-income communities. OCS is responsible for numerous statewide programs and provides millions of federal and state dollars to low-income communities for food, health services, employment services, and more.⁷ OCS's

³ Anita Hofschneider, *Hawaii Updates Unemployment Application to Include Pacific Migrants*, Civil Beat, April 14, 2020, at <https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/04/hawaii-updates-unemployment-application-to-include-pacific-migrants/>.

⁴ Anita Hofschneider, *Report: Battling Discrimination Against Micronesians Requires Policy Changes*, Civil Beat, October 15, 2019, <https://www.civilbeat.org/2019/10/report-battling-discrimination-against-micronesians-requires-policy-changes/>

⁵ Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, *Hawai`i's Working Population: An Analysis by Industry 2012-2016*, (April 2018).

⁶ Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, *The State of Hawai`i Data Book 2018*, Table 1.45 – Language Spoken at Home, by Educational Attainment and Employment Status: 2013-2017 (2018).

⁷ Here are just a few examples of OCS's staff portfolio:

Federal Food Programs. OCS works with the Hawai`i Foodbank, Maui Food Bank, the Food Basket, and others. OCS facilitates the delivery of free USDA food to hundreds of thousands of Hawai`i residents through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and through two other federal food programs – the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.



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history, legislative purpose, and current responsibilities make it well positioned to implement the much-needed Immigrant Resource Centers for the state.

As we head into the next chapter of the fight to end COVID-19 and recover economically, we will only be successful if services and opportunities include *all* of Hawai`i's residents, including immigrants. This bill is an important step for that goal.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Catherine Chen, Co-chair, Hawai`i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

Liza Ryan Gill, Co-chair, Hawai`i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

State-funded programs. In Fiscal Year 2020 OCS managed a portfolio of 92 state grants-in-aid totaling more than \$25.6 million, of which approximately \$23.8 million was for capital improvement projects and \$1.8 million was for operating grants. OCS also administers a state-funded employment services program that helps Hawai`i's low-income individuals and legal permanent residents gain employment skills, find, and retain jobs.

COVID-19 programs. OCS's existing federally funded programs received direct funding from the CARES Act. In addition, OCS administered CARES Act funds (appropriated from the Legislature) for food distribution. OCS staff are experienced and needed by the state to administer essential programs aimed to provide a social safety net to low-income, vulnerable, and disadvantaged communities during the COVID-19.

SB-2457-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/19/2022 10:54:23 PM

Testimony for LAT on 3/22/2022 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Onishi, Vice Chair Sayama, and LAT Committee Members,

I am writing in support of SB2457 SD1, which appropriates money to the Office of Community Services (OCS) to restore funding for immigrant resource centers for the purpose of providing staff and resources to assist immigrant and refugee populations throughout the State.

As a public health professional working with foreign-born people and as the child of Vietnamese refugees, I have witnessed firsthand the desire for our local immigrant communities to contribute to our economies and culture. In the devastating economic fallout of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this measure would provide resources for communities that would enhance our workforce and civil society. Without it, these communities, and the State, would be less equipped to thrive and grow, both socially and economically.

I fully SUPPORT SB2457 SD1.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)

SB-2457-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/19/2022 7:33:54 PM

Testimony for LAT on 3/22/2022 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Wast of Taxe payer Money!!

SB-2457-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/21/2022 4:09:42 PM

Testimony for LAT on 3/22/2022 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roman Leverenz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am totally in favor in reestablishing and funding resource centers for our immigrant communities. The need is great and the fact of the matter is that in helping to make things better for our immigrant population, we are benefiting the entire community. as well. It is always better to be proactive rather than reactive and help to deal with issues and concerns now, rather than later.

I would like to see the bill include noncitizens in the language of the bill. This would include members of our Micronesian community who have a different status than other groups who have come to our Islands. They are not technically and legally immigrants because of their special relation to the United Statesf. And they are definitely, in my opinion, in need ot assistance that would help them to better integrate into our local society in all ways we think about this issue, e.g., economically, socially, politically, and culturally.