
HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS TO
CONVENE A WORKING GROUP TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT
SERVICES FOR IMMIGRANTS AND INCREASE IMMIGRANT
OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE CIVIC AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO
THE COMMUNITY.

1 WHEREAS, immigrants have been an important part of the
2 history of the State; are an integral part of Hawaii's diverse,
3 multicultural community; and make extensive contributions as our
4 neighbors, co-workers, employers, community leaders, and
5 taxpayers; and
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7 WHEREAS, despite their value to our community, immigrants
8 continue to face many barriers, including difficulty accessing
9 government services and appropriately responding to government
10 requirements to qualify for various services; and
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12 WHEREAS, in 2018, eighteen percent of the State's
13 population, or 256,000 persons, were immigrants or foreign-born
14 residents, and more than 145,000 persons were naturalized United
15 States citizens; and
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17 WHEREAS, many immigrants live in households having United
18 States citizens such as Hawaii-born children and American-born
19 spouses, and the top six countries of birth for immigrants to
20 Hawaii are the Philippines (sixty percent), Japan (eight
21 percent), China (eight percent), Korea (seven percent),
22 Micronesia (five percent), and Vietnam (three percent); further,
23 about one-third of limited English-speaking persons are native
24 speakers of the Filipino dialects Ilokano and Tagalog; and
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26 WHEREAS, immigrants are well-represented in the State's
27 workforce, in sectors such as agriculture (forty percent),
28 tourism and hospitality (thirty-three percent), and health care
29 (twenty-three percent), and collectively contribute more than
30 \$668 million in state and local taxes; and



1 WHEREAS, foreign-born residents, particularly recent
2 arrivals, often encounter discrimination and cultural
3 misunderstanding and face other barriers to full inclusion and
4 participation in society, partly due to limited knowledge of
5 their rights and responsibilities and limited English-language
6 ability, which in turn limits their access to government and
7 other community-based resources; and

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9 WHEREAS, in 1985, four anti-poverty agencies administering
10 state and federal funds -- the Progressive Neighborhoods
11 Program, Hawaii Office of Economic Opportunity, Refugee
12 Resettlement Program, and State Immigrant Services Center --
13 were consolidated by the Legislature, which established in its
14 place the Office of Community Services, an attached agency to
15 the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations; and

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17 WHEREAS, as an office whose legislatively-mandated mission
18 is to help low-income individuals and families, refugees, and
19 immigrants to live healthier lives, achieve greater economic
20 self-sufficiency, and increase their contributions to the State,
21 the Office of Community Services is responsible for numerous
22 statewide programs and provides millions of federal and state
23 dollars to low-income communities for food, health services,
24 employment services, and the like; and

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26 WHEREAS, the Office of Community Services' focus on, and
27 funding for, services to immigrant and refugee communities has
28 been seriously eroded, with nearly one hundred percent of
29 staffing and funds currently being used for low-income
30 communities but none for immigrant-specific services; and

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32 WHEREAS, many cities across the nation such as Seattle and
33 San Francisco have established comprehensive government-funded
34 offices for immigrant affairs, and by establishing the Office of
35 Community Services, the Legislature acknowledged that immigrants
36 and refugees need of targeted services; and

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38 WHEREAS, the Counties of Maui and Hawaii demonstrate their
39 commitment by having full-time staff to assist immigrants, yet
40 the City and County of Honolulu's current budget has funding for
41 positions that promote increased immigrant access to City



1 services, but no positions that have been established or filled;
2 and

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4 WHEREAS, President Biden and congressional leaders have
5 proposed significant changes in immigration policy and have also
6 expressed support for immigration programs, creation of a
7 National Office of New Americans, expanding access to
8 citizenship, funding workforce development and English language
9 learning programs, increasing access to justice and due process,
10 and rebuilding the capacity and infrastructure of local
11 communities to welcome refugees; and

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13 WHEREAS, the State would be in a stronger position to gain
14 access to new federal funding if the Office of Community
15 Services is equipped to provide leadership and a renewed focus
16 on responding to immigrant needs; and

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18 WHEREAS, the Office of Community Services is the primary
19 agency established by the Legislature to serve low-income
20 immigrant and refugee communities, but currently has little to
21 no focus on providing supportive services for these communities;
22 however, with improved planning and support, the Office of
23 Community Services can meet its statutory mandate to serve the
24 immigrant and refugee communities; now, therefore,

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26 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
27 Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
28 of 2021, that the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
29 is urged to convene a working group to improve access to
30 government services for immigrants and increase immigrant
31 opportunities to make civic and economic contributions to the
32 community; and

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34 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Director of Labor and
35 Industrial Relations is requested to convene the working group,
36 to consist of the following members or their designees:

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38 (1) The Governor;

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40 (2) The Director of Labor and Industrial Relations;



- 1 (3) The Executive Director of the Office of Community
- 2 Services;
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- 4 (4) The Executive Director of the Office of Language
- 5 Access;
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- 7 (5) A representative from the Hawaii Coalition for
- 8 Immigrant Rights, by invitation of the Director of
- 9 Labor and Industrial Relations;
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- 11 (6) A representative from the Inter-Agency Council for
- 12 Immigrant Services, by invitation of the Director of
- 13 Labor and Industrial Relations; and
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- 15 (7) A representative from any other government entity or
- 16 community organization that the working group deems
- 17 relevant and appropriate; and
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19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested
 20 to select one of its members to serve as chairperson; and

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 22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested
 23 to submit a report of its findings and recommendations,
 24 including any proposed legislation, no later than twenty days
 25 prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2022; and

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 27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
 28 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor; Director of Labor and
 29 Industrial Relations; Executive Director of the Office of
 30 Community Services; Executive Director of the Office of Language
 31 Access; Executive Director of the Hawaii Coalition for Immigrant
 32 Rights; and President of the Inter-Agency Council for Immigrant
 33 Services.

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OFFERED BY: 
 MAR 12 2021