

MAR 11 2021

SENATE CONCURRENT 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
6

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
11

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
16

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
25

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



1 (twenty-three percent), and collectively contribute more than
2 \$668 million in state and local taxes; and

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

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

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

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

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

40
41 WHEREAS, the Counties of Maui and Hawaii demonstrate their
42 commitment by having full-time staff to assist immigrants, yet



1 the City and County of Honolulu's current budget has funding for
2 positions that promote increased immigrant access to City
3 services, but no positions that have been established or filled;
4 and
5

6 WHEREAS, President Biden and congressional leaders have
7 proposed significant changes in immigration policy and have also
8 expressed support for immigration programs, creation of a
9 National Office of New Americans, expanding access to
10 citizenship, funding workforce development and English language
11 learning programs, increasing access to justice and due process,
12 and rebuilding the capacity and infrastructure of local
13 communities to welcome refugees; and
14

15 WHEREAS, the State would be in a stronger position to gain
16 access to new federal funding if the Office of Community
17 Services is equipped to provide leadership and a renewed focus
18 on responding to immigrant needs; and
19

20 WHEREAS, the Office of Community Services is the primary
21 agency established by the Legislature to serve low-income
22 immigrant and refugee communities, but currently has little to
23 no focus on providing supportive services for these communities;
24 however, with improved planning and support, the Office of
25 Community Services can meet its statutory mandate to serve the
26 immigrant and refugee communities; now, therefore,
27

28 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first
29 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, the
30 House of Representatives concurring, that the Department of
31 Labor and Industrial Relations is urged to convene a working
32 group to improve access to government services for immigrants
33 and increase immigrant opportunities to make civic and economic
34 contributions to the community; and
35

36 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Director of Labor and
37 Industrial Relations is requested to convene the working group,
38 to consist of the following members or their designees:
39

40 (1) The Governor;

41
42 (2) The Director of Labor and Industrial Relations;



(3) The Executive Director of the Office of Community Services;

(4) The Executive Director of the Office of Language Access;

(5) A representative from the Hawaii Coalition for Immigrant Rights, by invitation of the Director of Labor and Industrial Relations;

(6) A representative from the Inter-Agency Council for Immigrant Services, by invitation of the Director of Labor and Industrial Relations; and

(7) A representative from any other government entity or community organization that the working group deems relevant and appropriate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested to select one of its members to serve as chairperson; and

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

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

OFFERED BY:

