

JAN 21 2022

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO IMMIGRANT RESOURCE CENTERS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii has a long  
2 history of welcoming immigrants. These immigrants and their  
3 children have made, and continue to make, significant  
4 contributions to the State. Immigrants continue to play a vital  
5 role in Hawaii's economy, workforce, and community.

6           The legislature further finds that immigrants make up  
7 approximately 250,000 members, or eighteen per cent, of Hawaii's  
8 population, including 145,000 persons who are naturalized  
9 citizens. Immigrants make up forty per cent of agricultural  
10 workers, thirty-three per cent of tourism and hospitality  
11 workers, and twenty-three per cent of health care workers in the  
12 State. Despite these numbers, many immigrants face barriers to  
13 success, including discrimination, cultural misunderstanding,  
14 and language access to government information and services.  
15 Immigrants are family, neighbors, co-workers, business owners,  
16 and professionals. The legislature finds that recent immigrants  
17 and naturalized citizens need and deserve access to government



1 services so that they may fully participate and contribute to  
2 our community.

3 The legislature also finds that in 1985, the legislature  
4 established the office of community services. The office of  
5 community services' legislative mandate and mission is to serve  
6 low-income individuals, immigrants, and refugees. In  
7 establishing the office of community services, the legislature  
8 effectively consolidated four anti-poverty agencies  
9 administering state and federal funds: the office of the  
10 progressive neighborhoods program, the Hawaii office of economic  
11 opportunity, the refugee resettlement program, and the state  
12 immigrant services center. Previously, the state immigrant  
13 services center was part of the governor's office, and it  
14 received significant funding and staffing to serve immigrants  
15 and refugees before its consolidation and establishment as an  
16 agency attached to the department of labor and industrial  
17 relations.

18 The legislature believes that the director and staff of the  
19 office of community services have successfully served low-income  
20 families and communities by administrating millions of dollars  
21 in federal funds and grants-in-aid. Immigrants and refugees can



1 also benefit from these services, but these programs do not  
2 address the needs of immigrants and refugees who have limited  
3 English proficiency or who are unfamiliar with government  
4 regulations and benefits. House Concurrent Resolution 169  
5 (2021) requested a report on ways to "improve access to  
6 government services for immigrants and increase immigrant  
7 opportunities to make civic and economic contributions to the  
8 community." Community groups noted that the office of community  
9 services is the primary state agency to serve immigrants and  
10 noted that there is a need for a dedicated staff assigned to  
11 address immigrant and refugee matters and reinstate immigrant  
12 resource centers. Unfortunately, funding for the office of  
13 community services was previously reduced by approximately  
14 \$700,000, and immigrant resource centers have not been available  
15 for years.

16 The legislature also believes that it is the State's  
17 responsibility to enforce laws and provide programs to benefit  
18 the State. Among the groups that face barriers to equal access  
19 to services are those with limited English proficiency. Staff  
20 and additional resources are needed so that the office of



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1 community services may meet its legislative mandate and mission  
2 to serve low-income individuals, immigrants, and refugees.

3 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate  
4 moneys for the office of community services so that the office  
5 may fund immigrant resource centers.

6 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
7 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
8 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for  
9 the office of community services to restore funding for  
10 immigrant resource centers for the purpose of providing staff  
11 and resources to assist immigrant and refugee populations  
12 throughout the State.

13 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
14 labor and industrial relations for the purposes of this Act.

15 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.

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INTRODUCED BY: *Bennette J. Muraloka*



# S.B. NO. 2457

**Report Title:**

Filipino Caucus; DLIR; Immigrant Resource Centers; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates moneys to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Office of Community Services to restore funding for immigrant resource centers.

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