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



1 services so that they may fully participate in 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 a 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 administering millions of dollars in
21 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 No. 169,
5 Regular Session of 2021, requested a report on ways to "improve
6 access to government services for immigrants and increase
7 immigrant opportunities to make civic and economic contributions
8 to the community." Community groups noted that the office of
9 community services is the primary state agency to serve
10 immigrants and that there is a need for a dedicated staff
11 assigned to address immigrant and refugee matters and reinstate
12 immigrant resource centers. Unfortunately, funding for the
13 office of community services was previously reduced by
14 approximately \$700,000, and immigrant resource centers have not
15 been available 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



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 funds for the office of community services so that the office
5 may fund immigrant resource centers with an outreach component.

6 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
7 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much
8 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for the
9 office of community services to restore funding for immigrant
10 resource centers for the purpose of providing staff and
11 resources to assist immigrant and refugee populations throughout
12 the State; provided that the office of community services shall
13 include an outreach component in the services it provides.

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

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



S.B. NO. 2457
S.D. 1
H.D. 1
C.D. 1

Report Title:

Filipino Caucus; Department of Labor and Industrial Relations;
Immigrant Resource Centers; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to the Department of Labor and Industrial
Relations' Office of Community Services to restore funding for
immigrant resource centers. (CD1)

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not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

