
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



1 naturalized citizens need and deserve access to government
2 services so that they may fully participate in and contribute to
3 our community.

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

19 The legislature believes that the director and staff of the
20 office of community services have successfully served low-income
21 families and communities by administering millions of dollars in



1 federal funds and grants-in-aid. Immigrants and refugees can
2 also benefit from these services, but these programs do not
3 address the needs of immigrants and refugees who have limited
4 English proficiency or who are unfamiliar with government
5 regulations and benefits. House Concurrent Resolution No. 169
6 (2021) requested a report on ways to "improve access to
7 government services for immigrants and increase immigrant
8 opportunities to make civic and economic contributions to the
9 community." Community groups noted that the office of community
10 services is the primary state agency to serve immigrants and
11 that there is a need for a dedicated staff assigned to address
12 immigrant and refugee matters and reinstate immigrant resource
13 centers. Unfortunately, funding for the office of community
14 services was previously reduced by approximately \$700,000, and
15 immigrant resource centers have not 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 \$ 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; provided that the office of community
13 services shall include an outreach component in the services it
14 provides.

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

17 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



Report Title:

Filipino Caucus; DLIR; 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. Effective 7/1/2050. (HD1)

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