
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LEGAL SERVICES FOR LOW-INCOME IMMIGRANTS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there are many
2 immigrants who seek to continue legal residence or obtain legal
3 status in the country. However, the immigration court process
4 is highly complex and may be intimidating or overwhelming for
5 immigrants who may struggle with navigating a different culture
6 and language. Many immigrants may lack the resources to obtain
7 legal representation, which may have profound impacts on
8 immigrants' abilities to receive fair hearings.

9 The legislature further finds that Hawaii has always
10 embraced a welcoming attitude for people of all backgrounds,
11 nationalities, and ethnicities. According to the 2017 American
12 Immigration Council Fact Sheet, nearly eighteen per cent of
13 Hawaii residents are immigrants, while more than one in seven
14 residents is a native-born United States citizen with at least
15 one immigrant parent. Immigrants are an integral part of
16 Hawaii's diverse, multicultural community and make extensive
17 contributions to the State.



1 Given the current political climate and the number of
2 immigrants being detained and faced with deportation, immigrants
3 in Hawaii are in dire need of legal help. Therefore, there are
4 vital public policy reasons behind providing legal assistance
5 and legal counsel to immigrants in immigration proceedings.

6 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
7 funds to the judiciary to contract with non-profit organizations
8 to provide legal counsel and assistance to low-income immigrants
9 in immigration proceedings, including deportation defense and
10 asylum, and for any other immigration legal issues.

11 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
12 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$250,000 or so much
13 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for the
14 judiciary to contract with non-profit organizations to provide
15 legal counsel and assistance to low-income immigrants in
16 immigration proceedings, including deportation defense and
17 asylum, and for any other immigration legal issues; provided
18 that, for purposes of this Act, "low-income" means a person
19 whose family income does not exceed the federal poverty level
20 for a family of applicable size.



1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the judiciary for
2 the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on December 31,
4 2050.



Report Title:

Judiciary; Immigrants; Immigration Proceedings; Legal Counsel;
Legal Assistance; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates \$250,000 to the Judiciary to contract with non-profit organizations to provide legal counsel and assistance to low-income immigrants. Defines "low income" to mean a person whose family income is no more than the federal poverty level. Effective 12/31/2050. (SD1)

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