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# 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 many immigrants seek  
2 to continue legal residence or obtain legal status in the  
3 country. However, the immigration court process is highly  
4 complex and may be intimidating or overwhelming for some  
5 immigrants, who may struggle with navigating a different culture  
6 and language. Many immigrants lack the resources to obtain  
7 legal representation, which may have profound impacts on their  
8 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 having 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 facing deportation, immigrants in  
3 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 nonprofit 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 legal issues pertaining to  
11 immigration.

12           SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
13 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$           or so much  
14 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for the  
15 judiciary to contract with nonprofit organizations to provide  
16 legal counsel and assistance to low-income immigrants in  
17 immigration proceedings, including deportation defense and  
18 asylum, and for any other legal issues pertaining to  
19 immigration; provided that, for purposes of this Act,  
20 "low-income" means a person whose family income does not exceed  
21 the federal poverty level 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 moneys to the Judiciary to contract with nonprofit 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. (SD2)

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