

**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**

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In reply, please refer to:
File: 24-012

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2787 SD2
RELATING TO IMMIGRATION**

Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair
House Committee on Labor & Government Operations

Hearing Date: 3/14/2024

Room Number: Conf. Room 309 &
Videoconference

1 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure may impact the priorities identified in the Governor's
2 Executive Supplemental Budget Request.

3 **Agency's Position:** The Office of Language Access (OLA) supports this measure, provided the
4 measure's passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities in the Governor's Executive
5 Supplemental Budget Request and defers to the Office of Community Services (OCS) on
6 implementation and resource needs.

7 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this measure is to establish and appropriate funds for
8 the Immigrant Services and Access Unit within the Department of Labor and Industrial
9 Relations' Office of Community Services (OCS) and to declare that the general fund expenditure
10 is exceeded.

11 Hawaii is one of the most culturally diverse states and has one of the highest proportions of non-
12 English speakers in the nation. Many of these non-English speakers are immigrants and migrants
13 with limited English proficiency (LEP). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022
14 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, it is estimated that 25.73%, or 351,542, of
15 Hawaii's residents aged 5 years and older speak a language other than English at home. Of these,
16 150,743, or 11.06%, indicated that they speak English "less than very well."

1 English proficiency, or the lack thereof, has a great impact on people's economic and social
2 activities, and health literacy and wellness. It affects their ability to successfully access
3 education, employment, and important public assistance, benefits, programs, and services.
4 Establishing an immigrant service and access unit will provide a critical link for communication
5 and make services accessible to individuals with limited English proficiency.

6 This measure will allow OLA to work closely with other partners to further improve language
7 access in our state government. If the measure is passed, OLA will collaborate with OCS to
8 assist immigrant and migrant individuals with limited English proficiency to the extent allowable
9 by law.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

JOVANIE DOMINGO DELA CRUZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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IN REPLY, REFER TO:
OCS 24.1102

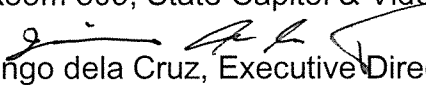
March 11, 2024

To: The Honorable Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair,
The Honorable Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Labor and Government Operations

Date: Thursday, March 14, 2024

Time: 9:15 a.m.

Place: Conference Room 309, State Capitol & Videoconference

From: 
Jovanie Domingo dela Cruz, Executive Director
DLIR – Office of Community Services

Position: Support

Re: S.B. 2787, S.D. 2 – RELATING TO IMMIGRATION

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

This bill would appropriate funds to the Office of Community Services (OCS) to provide for additional dedicated staff and additional program funds to direct OCS to establish an immigration services and access unit (hereinafter, sometimes "ISAU") within OCS.

The bill would add a section to HRS Chapter 371K, which established OCS, to describe the purpose of the unit as to "promote immigrant economic self-sufficiency, community inclusion, and integration. The immigration services and access unit shall provide statewide services, coordinate with relevant government and nonprofit agencies, and approve contracts with qualified nonprofit organizations to support integration and civic engagement. The immigration services and access unit shall also be responsible for the immigrant resource centers, administration of the refugee program, and management of other programs relating to immigrants."

The bill would appropriate sums, in amounts to be identified, for the new State fiscal year – FY 2024-2025, which starts on July 1, 2024. The funds would allow for one or more FTE staff in the ISAU plus additional funds for services to be provided by the ISAU. The bill also states that the appropriation is made in accordance with Hawaii State Constitution Art VII and HRS §§37-91 and -93 relating to appropriations that cause the general fund expenditure to be exceeded, and states that the appropriation is in the public interest and the appropriation made in this bill meets the needs addressed by the bill.

II. CURRENT LAW

The Office of Community Services (OCS) is an agency attached to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. OCS was created by the Legislature by Act 305, SLH 1985, codified as Chapter 371K, Hawai'i Revised Statutes.

The mission of OCS is to eliminate the causes and conditions of poverty for economically disadvantaged persons, immigrants, and refugees in the State of Hawaii, by facilitating and enhancing the development, delivery, and coordination of effective programs for these persons and communities to enable them to achieve and maintain greater economic self-sufficiency and integration into Hawaii's society.

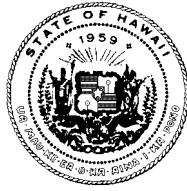
III. COMMENTS ON THE BILL

OCS supports the intent of this bill, provided that appropriations would not replace or adversely impact priorities in the Governor's Executive Budget Request.

S.B. 2787, S.D. 2 would reinforce the mandate that OCS already has pursuant to HRS Chapter 371K. Having a unit dedicated to coordinating and addressing the need of one of OCS's major service populations is very critical to ensuring that this population receives proper government and social services. The need for such coordinated services was highlighted during the recent Maui wildfires. Having the ISAU would help OCS fulfill one of its legislative mandates.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 12, 2024

TO: The Honorable The Honorable Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
House Committee on Labor & Government Operations

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2787 SD2 – RELATING TO IMMIGRATION.**

Hearing: March 13, 2024, 9:15 a.m.
Conference Room 309, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure, provides comments, and defers to the Department of Labor & Industrial Relations, the Office of Community Services, and the Office of Language Access. DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not replace or reduce budget priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: This bill establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit. Appropriates moneys for the unit, including for new positions. Declares that the appropriation exceeds the general fund expenditure ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

The Committee on Labor and Technology (SD1) amended the measure by making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

The Committee on Ways and Means (SD2) further amended the measure by changing the effective date to July 1, 2050, to facilitate further discussion.

Immigrants and migrants in Hawaii are vital members of the community and make up a growing percentage of the workforce. No matter the reason for immigration, many immigrants faced hardships in their home countries to come to the United States to pursue their dreams and a better life for themselves and their families. Many immigrants have limited English proficiency (LEP), and seeking legal information and resources in English and navigating the government systems is difficult.

Reinvesting immigrant services in the OCS will support immigrant and refugee populations transitioning to life in the United States. The Department also encourages the Legislature to provide funds to DLIR OCS to consider serving Hawaii's migrant populations. Importantly, having trustworthy immigrant services may also prevent harm perpetrated by unfortunate elements of society who prey on vulnerable individuals and immigrants.

In addition to the cultural diversity that immigrants and migrants contribute that makes Hawaii a unique and vibrant place, the immigrant and migrant community brings additional experience, investment, and innovation that enhances our workforce and economy.

If the measure passes, DHS will collaborate with DLIR OCS to assist immigrant and migrant individuals and families to the extent allowable by law.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



Senate Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Support: SB 2787 SD2

Monday, March 11, 2024 3:00 p.m. Conference Room 225

Dear Chair Wakai, Vice Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee,

HAPA is writing in support of SB 2787 SD2, which appropriates funds to establish the position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency.

One out of nine people living in Hawaii has limited English proficiency. During disasters, they face disproportionate risks due to challenges in understanding evacuation orders, emergency relief information, and accessing essential services like emergency medical care and shelter assistance. The aftermath of a disaster often brings barriers for individuals with limited English proficiency when applying for state or county programs, including financial, medical, housing, and food assistance programs. The absence of language interpreters at shelters during the August 8, 2023, Maui wildfire underscores the critical need for a coordinated response. Hawaii's professional and community interpreters filled the void, demonstrating the community's resilience. However, establishing a dedicated Limited English Language Access Coordinator within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency will ensure a systematic and planned approach to language access during emergencies.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the successful passage of SB 2787 SD2!

Thank you for your support and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', written in a cursive style.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director



World Education Services Statement of Support for SB 2787 SD1

World Education services (WES) supports SB 2787 SD1, which promotes the economic inclusion of the more than 263,904 immigrants and refugees who live in Hawaii¹ by establishing an immigration services and access unit within the office of community services in the state.

In partnership with the American Immigration Council, WES convenes the Office of New Americans (ONA) State Network: a forum for state policy leaders across the U.S. to drive transformative reforms that ensure immigrants and refugees are welcomed in their communities and have meaningful access to programs and services. State ONAs – and other offices that perform similar functions but may go by different names, such as the immigration services and access unit - improve the efficiency and efficacy of immigrant and refugee inclusion initiatives. They serve as a central hub to facilitate state-level, cross-sector coordination of services, resources, and policy development.

As U.S. immigrant and refugee populations continue to grow, so does the potential for state ONAs and similar offices to make a positive impact on local economies. With nationwide labor shortages² deepening across critical sectors, immigrant and refugee workers have become increasingly crucial to Hawaii's economy, comprising almost 21 percent of the state's workforce.³ Yet many of Hawaii's immigrants remain unemployed or underemployed, systemic barriers preventing them from fully utilizing their education and skills - including more than 27 percent of those who hold a bachelor's degree or higher.⁴ At the same time, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce classifies Hawaii's labor shortage as "more severe," with only 58 workers available for every 100 job vacancies.⁵ An immigration services and access unit can help diversify and bolster Hawaii's workforce by facilitating the transition of competent, qualified immigrant and refugee workers into the fields that need them.

¹ "Immigrants in Hawaii." American Immigration Council.

<https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/hawaii/>

² "Understanding America's Labor Shortage." U.S. Chamber of Commerce, January 9, 2024.

<https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/understanding-americas-labor-shortage>.

³ "Immigrants in Hawaii." American Immigration Council.

<https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/hawaii/>

⁴ "State Workforce Data - US." Migration Policy Institute, 2022. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/workforce/US/HI/>

⁵ "Understanding Hawaii's Labor Market." U.S. Chamber of Commerce, November 1, 2023.

<https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/the-states-suffering-most-from-the-labor-shortage?state=hi>



By establishing an immigration services and access unit within the office of community services, tasked with promoting economic mobility for immigrants and refugees, SB 2787 SD1 will provide essential support to Hawaii's efforts to address labor shortages and ensure a more inclusive workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement of support.

WES is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. For 50 years, WES has set the standard for international academic credential evaluation, supporting millions of people as they seek to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through decades of experience as a leader in global education, WES has developed a wide range of tools to pursue social impact at scale. From evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding, we partner with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to uplift individuals and drive systems change. Together with its partners, WES enables people to learn, work, and thrive in new places.



**Testimony of The Legal Clinic in
SUPPORT of SENATE BILL 2787, SENATE DRAFT 2,
RELATING TO IMMIGRATION**
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair
March 14, 2024 | 9:15 am | Conference Room 309

Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Garrett, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic (“TLC”) submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 2787, Senate Draft 2, which would establish an Immigration Services and Access Unit within the Office of Community Services of the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. The purpose of the new unit would be “to promote immigrant economic self-sufficiency, community inclusion, and integration.”

TLC, through our legal staff of three attorneys and three paralegals, provides legal and related services to Hawai‘i’s low- and moderate-income immigrant communities. While our primary function is to provide legal services, we have seen that the needs of our growing immigrant communities extend far beyond legal needs to virtually all aspects of their lives. Further, we have seen that immigrant communities encounter added difficulties, beyond those faced by other under-served communities, in accessing available resources. Factors peculiar to the immigrant community, such as language barriers and the lack of language services, and uncertainty with governmental agencies and the “system,” exacerbate their already difficult situation.

This heightened need was made clear by two recent disasters. First, the Covid-19 pandemic hit the low-income immigrant community with particular force. They were disproportionately affected by the loss of jobs, lower rates of health care coverage, higher rates of Covid-19 infection, and less access to unemployment insurance and other public benefits; this was due, in large part, to language barriers, unfamiliarity with the system, and related factors. Second, we have seen the same disproportionate impact in the Maui wildfires and aftermath. Immigrants, many of whom worked in the hotel and service industries in the Lahaina area, not only lost their jobs, homes, and possessions, but faced added difficulties in obtaining assistance because of the lack of adequate language resources. Many also lost their documents proving their legal status in the United States, which created further difficulties. Others without legal status were understandably apprehensive about applying for needed services for fear of revealing themselves to authorities. And, when they did apply, were found to be ineligible for certain services, such as those provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

An effective state-wide agency could have helped alleviate some of this human suffering. Currently, only Hawai‘i County and Maui County have immigrant services offices, but with limited resources. Hawai‘i needs a state-wide agency to help provide and coordinate the resources – such as language services, workforce development training, legal services, and the like – to promote immigrant economic self-sufficiency, community inclusion and integration.

We strongly urge the adoption of Senate Bill 2787, Senate Draft 2.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corey Park". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Corey" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Park".

Corey Park
President, Board of Directors
The Legal Clinic

TESTIMONY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
SB2787_SD2 RELATING TO IMMIGRATION
March 14, 2024, at 9:15 am
State Capitol Conference Room 309 via Videoconference

Honorable Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Garrett, and Committee Members,

The Hawaii Federation of Republican Women stand in STRONG OPPOSITION to SB2787_SD2 for the following reasons:

Duplication of Services. The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR), Office of Community Services (OCS) administers grants for programs that assist low-income individuals including immigrants. The OCS currently assists immigrants in these 4 categories: citizens, conditional and permanent, non-immigrant, and undocumented. SB2787_SD2 specifically proposes to assist RECENT immigrants. How recent?

Fiscal Irresponsibility. SB2787_SD2 proposes to ADD positions for OCS. Why? Is DLIR expecting to INCREASE the number of immigrants they would like to serve? Where is this projected increase of immigrants coming from? Without these questions being addressed, it is irresponsible to pass this bill.

Furthermore, SB2787_SD2 declares that the appropriation exceeds the general fund expenditure ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025. In other words, the current established budget does not meet the needs of increased staffing.

Increased Government Tax Burden. Hard working taxpayers already carry the burden of government employee salaries and infrastructure needs (i.e. office space, employee benefits, etc.). “We the people” want less government and more fiscal accountability. We are the second highest taxed state in the nation where the cost of living is exorbitantly high.

Do you want to add to the current high tax burden that our citizens already carry on their backs? I think the answer would be no because you serve the citizens, and you want a better future for Hawaii.

I encourage you to think about the decisions that you make today that will have an impact on our future generations to come.

Please vote NO on SB2787_SD2.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jamie Detwiler. President
Hawaii Federation of Republican Women

SB-2787-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2024 3:49:35 PM

Testimony for LGO on 3/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
AnnDionne Selestin	Roots Reborn	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB2787, which establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit.

With immigrants comprising eighteen percent of Hawaii's population, the state must take proactive measures to support their integration. The need for comprehensive services for immigrants is evident, considering the various issues they encounter upon arrival, ranging from language access and legal matters to acculturation challenges and employment searches. Hawaii has a significant number of new immigrants every year, as well as 18 percent of the population comprising immigrants, who have played an essential role in contributing to the state's economy, workforce, and community. The proposed Immigration Services and Access Unit will play a pivotal role in addressing the diverse needs of immigrants, including English language training, legal services related to immigration status, and support for accessing government services.

As an Immigrant we value family, we work hard, endure hardship just so we can take care of our family. At times understanding direction when training can be tough, but yet we manage. Finding good paying jobs can be difficult for us , so we tend to settle for what is offered to us , but I believe if we had the language support and extra push , we can do much more.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the successful passage of SB2787.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

AnnDionne Selestin



**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2787
RELATING TO IMMIGRATION**

COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 14, 2024

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) is in **full support of SB2787**, which establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit.

Immigrants are significant contributors to our State's economy. With immigrants comprising eighteen percent of Hawaii's population, the State must take proactive measures to support their integration. They accounted for nearly 40 percent of agricultural workers and 33 percent of tourism, entertainment, and hospitality workers. They also constitute 68 percent of housekeeping workers, over half of all chefs and head cooks, 47 percent of all nursing assistants, and 20 percent of all physicians. Furthermore, immigrants contributed \$17.6 billion to our local economy in 2018 alone. Additionally, the same year, over \$874 million from immigrant households went to state and local taxes¹. These figures underscore the significant economic impact of immigrants on our State's prosperity.

It is clear that immigrants are vital to our communities and essential for our economy's continued growth and success. Despite their contributions, recent immigrants often face numerous obstacles, including language barriers, legal issues related to their immigration status, and challenges with acculturation and integration. Providing comprehensive services to address these needs is not only a matter of compassion but also of practicality and economic sense. To fully realize the potential of our immigrant population, we must provide them with the necessary support and resources for integration and success.

¹ *Immigrants and Migrants in Hawai'i Essential Contributors to the State's Workforce and Economy*, Partnership for a New American Economy Research Fund, research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/05/NAE_Hawaii_V7_FINAL.pdf.



The proposed Immigration Services and Access Unit will play a pivotal role in addressing the diverse needs of immigrants, including English language training, legal services related to immigration status, and support for accessing government services, including assistance with naturalization. This will ensure that recent immigrants receive the support they need to thrive in our communities. Investing in immigrant integration has proven benefits for our State. Immigrants who receive support and opportunities for economic self-sufficiency contribute more effectively to our workforce and economy as mentioned in the statistics above. Additionally, it's important to note that naturalization increases the earnings of those eligible to naturalize by 8.9 percent. This increase means that the earnings of those who become citizens will be 8.9 percent higher than their earnings if they were not naturalized².

Importantly, this bill is not only about providing vital services but also about fiscal responsibility. By investing in immigrant integration, we can prevent long-term costs associated with unaddressed challenges, such as reliance on public assistance or underutilization of immigrant talent and potential. Moreover, by coordinating with existing resources and nonprofit organizations, we can maximize the impact of state funding.

We urge you to support this bill and ensure its swift passage for the well-being of Hawaii and all its residents.

Thank you for your support and consideration,
Maria Rallojaj
Policy and Communications Coordinator

² Enchautegui, María E., and Linda Giannarelli. *The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities*, Urban Institute, New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2015/12/18/2000549-the-economic-impact-of-naturalization-on-immigrants-and-cities.pdf.



Testimony in support of SB 2787 SD2
RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES
Submitted by Hawai`i Friends of Civil Rights,
Co-chairs: Amy Agbayani and Pat McManaman

Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Takauya Garrett and members:

Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights strongly supports SB2787 sd2 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES. This bill establishes and appropriates money and positions for an Immigrant Services and Access unit within the Office of Community Services, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.

We appreciate the legislature's approval of the Filipino Legislative Caucus priorities related to immigration services the past sessions eg. HCR 169 (2021) and SB 2457(2022). We also appreciated consideration of bills in 2023 for an OCS immigrant service unit and funding (SB 812 and HB 439)

Community leaders and the legislature acknowledge that OCS resources for immigrants were significantly reduced over the years and provided recommendation and resources for immigrants and the Office of Community Service to meet its legislative mandate relating to immigrants and refugees.

We respectfully request you support SB 2787 sd2, which is one of the Filipino Legislative Caucus priority bills. SB 2787 will establish an Immigrant Services and Access unit within the Office of Community Services whose purpose is to promote economic self-sufficiency, inclusion, and community integration for immigrants in our state. Many

states and cities have an administrative organization, staffing and programs like the proposed Immigrant Services and Access unit.

There are over 250,000 foreign born persons in the state; nearly half of all immigrants to Hawai'i are from the Philippines (46%); Japan (8%), China (8%), Korea (7%), Micronesia (5%), Vietnam (4%) and Mexico (2%). Fifty-seven percent of Hawaii's immigrants are naturalized US citizens and many have US born children. A significant number of immigrants are eligible to apply for citizenship. Limited English proficient persons are unable to access government services even though they are eligible and need the service.

Economists agree that the aging population in the US has serious economic impacts as there are fewer working age people to support the economy, social security and tax. Working age immigrants are essential in many communities. In 2021, the Filipino Legislative Caucus invited various experts to provide information and recommendations on Hawaii's immigrants to inform their legislative priority bills. Below is a summary of a report by the New American Economy in partnership with The Legal Clinic for Hawai'i immigrants. Mo Cantor, author of the report made a zoom presentation to the 2021 Filipino Legislative Caucus:

Immigrants and Migrants in Hawaii: Essential Contributors to the State's Workforce and Economy

Using data from the 5-year 2018 American Community Survey as well as qualitative policy data from the NAE Cities Index,¹ this report takes a closer look at Hawaii's foreign-born population² to explore how immigrants and refugees play an important role in the state's economy, workforce, and community.

Immigrants are vital to industries and occupations that are essential to Hawaii's economy.

Despite making up 18 percent of Hawaii's population, immigrants accounted for nearly 40 percent of agricultural workers, and 33 percent of the workers in the tourism, entertainment, and hospitality industry. Within specific industries, immigrants are playing critical roles in certain occupations, accounting for 68 percent of housekeeping workers, over half of all chefs and head cooks, 47 percent of all nursing assistants, and 20 percent of all physicians.

Immigrants make significant economic contributions to Hawaii's economy.

Alongside the \$1.55 billion that immigrants paid in federal taxes and \$874 million in state and local taxes, immigrants contributed \$780 million to Social Security and \$195 million to Medicare in 2018. After taxes, immigrants in the state had a spending power of \$5.8 billion, and contributed over \$17.5 billion to Hawaii's GDP.

Immigrants are creating jobs in Hawai'i.

In 2018, immigrants accounted for over a quarter of all entrepreneurs in the state, making them 24.4 percent more likely to be entrepreneurs than their U.S.-born counterparts.

Immigrants hail from a diverse range of countries.

While nearly half of the immigrants in Hawai'i are from the Philippines (45.8%), the rest of the top ten countries of origin for immigrants are quite varied: Japan (8.4%), China (7.8%), Korea (7.0%), Micronesia (4.6%), Vietnam (3.9%), Mexico (2.2%), Marshall Islands (2.2%), Canada (1.6%), and Hong Kong (1.5%).

More than half of the immigrants in Hawai'i are naturalized, and many immigrants are likely eligible to naturalize.

Over 56 percent of immigrants in Hawai'i are naturalized U.S. citizens, and over 40,000 immigrants are likely eligible to naturalize, which would allow them to access a greater variety of jobs that may require citizenship, and increase their likelihood of starting a business.

Immigrants are more likely than U.S.-born residents to not have health insurance.

Despite accounting for 18 percent of the population, immigrants accounted for over 31 percent of residents in Hawai'i that did not have health insurance in 2018.

Immigrants are more likely to live in multi-generational households.

In 2018, 48.1 percent of immigrant households involved 2 generations of adults—adult children living with their adult parents—or 3+ generations, compared to 37.5 percent of their U.S.-born counterparts.

In comparison with other comparable U.S. cities, Honolulu struggles to provide policies that support immigrant integration.

Looking at NAE's 2020 Cities Index, Honolulu ranked 95th out of the 100 largest U.S. cities in terms of policies and socioeconomic opportunities that support immigrant integration. Factors taken into consideration in the Cities Index include in-state tuition for undocumented residents, cooperation between local police and federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials, and statewide cooperation with sanctuary cities.

HCR 169 (2021) requested the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) to convene a working group to "improve access to government services for immigrants and increase immigrant opportunities to make civic and economic contributions to the community. This report identified barriers and contributions of immigrants. The report made recommendations to increase resources and improve the capacity of the Office of Community Services to meet its mandate to serve immigrants and refugees. An immigration unit within the Office of Community Service will increase integration and economic self-sufficiency and workforce participation for immigrants.

The HCR 169 Working group noted that the array and interrelated issues facing immigrant workers and their families requires coordination and support from other state agencies and an dedicated staff and unit within OCS would improve OCS's capacity to better meet the needs of immigrants and services of other agencies.

Although immigration is a federal responsibility, states also have responsibilities on many regulations and services to persons residing in the state. States and local governments have to fill in some of the gaps in services not provided by the federal government. For example, this week we are grateful to our congressional delegation and the President's approval of a treaty and funding for the Compact of Free Association (COFA) that would make citizens from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau. It is our understanding that COFA migrants who were harmed by the Lahaina wildfires will be eligible for FEMA and state funds will not be needed. At this time, the state receives federal funds for refugees. OCS has a number of federal funds related to workforce development that includes immigrants and refugees. We need to identify other federal resources that may assist immigrants in the state (eg federal adult education funds for English classes, training funds for agricultural workers). We believe a dedicated unit within OCS to serve immigrants

and refugees may be able to identify and apply for more federal funding. US Senators introduced a bill to establish an Office of New Americans to coordinate federal programs "to respond effectively to immigrant and refugee integration issues such as language learning, adult education and workforce training, health care and naturalization. This legislation shows that there is recognition that immigration is primarily a federal responsibility and for providing federal resources and grants to state and local governments.

We believe an Immigrant Services and Access unit will improve OCS's capacity to serve the immigrant community who face barriers to accessing government resources and are excluded from full participation in our community. Immigrants continue to contribute to our economy and our multicultural community. We respectfully ask you to support SB 2787 sd2 for it will benefit our state and immigrant communities.

Amy Agbayani and Pat McManaman, co-chairs
Hawai'i Friends of Civil Service

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2787
RELATING TO IMMIGRATION**

COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 14, 2024

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB2787, which establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit.

With immigrants comprising eighteen percent of Hawaii's population, the state must take proactive measures to support their integration. The need for comprehensive services for immigrants is evident, considering the various issues they encounter upon arrival, ranging from language access and legal matters to acculturation challenges and employment searches. Hawaii has a significant number of new immigrants every year, as well as 18 percent of the population comprising immigrants, who have played an essential role in contributing to the state's economy, workforce, and community. The proposed Immigration Services and Access Unit will play a pivotal role in addressing the diverse needs of immigrants, including English language training, legal services related to immigration status, and support for accessing government services.

Immigrants are essential players in Hawaii's labor force. Despite making up 18 percent of the State's population, they accounted for nearly 40 percent of agricultural workers, and 33 percent of the workers in tourism, entertainment, and hospitality industries. Within those industries 68 percent are housekeepers, and 47 percent are nursing assistants. It is also important to highlight the economic contribution they make in our state. They pay \$1.55 billion in federal taxes, \$874 million in state and local taxes, and have contributed \$780 million to Social Security and \$195 million to Medicare in 2018. Immigrants invest in our local economy by contributing over \$17.5 billion to Hawaii's GDP¹. Many immigrants pay taxes through their ITIN despite not being naturalized. Undocumented immigrants do not have the same rights or receive the same social services as a citizen even though they contribute to taxes. Over 56 percent of immigrants are naturalized citizens, and more are eligible to become naturalized². This bill would also support the people of Hawaii while taking the measures to support new immigrants. The proposed Immigration Services and Access Unit would invest in a community that contributes to our local economy.

¹ See Immigrants and Migrants in Hawai'i Essential Contributors to the State's Workforce and Economy by the New American Economy Report of 2021, page 2

² See Immigrants and Migrants in Hawai'i Essential Contributors to the State's Workforce and Economy by the New American Economy Report of 2021, page 3

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the successful passage of SB2787.

Thank you for your support and consideration,
Genesis Gil

SB-2787-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 9:09:22 AM

Testimony for LGO on 3/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terrina Wong	Pacific Gateway Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 13, 2024

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2787

RELATED TO ELECTRONIC INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

[COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS](#)

Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair

Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 14, 2024 at 9:15 AM

Dear Chair Matayoshi and Vice Chair Garrett,

I am writing on behalf of Pacific Gateway Center in support of SB2787, which establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit. Appropriates moneys for the unit, including for new positions. Declares that the appropriation exceeds the general fund expenditure ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025..

Pacific Gateway Center is the designated Immigrant Resource Center for Maui (including Moloka'i and Lana'i), Kauai, and O'ahu (which we share with Parents and Children Together). Inherent in this role is our commitment to alleviate barriers to the foreign born rebuilding and reimagining their lives in Hawaii. This includes providing direct client immigration legal and social services.

We interact regularly with the State of Hawaii's Office of Community Services and we know first-hand the need for an Immigration Services Access Unit that will support the IRC's statewide in policy implementation, statewide coordination, and applications for federal funds as well as other services to support immigrants in our state.

I strongly urge you to pass SB2787. Thank you for your support and consideration.

Sincerely,

Terrina Wong
Deputy Director, Social Services

Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: House Committee on Labor
Re: **SB 2787 SD2 – Relating to Immigration**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
March 14, 2024, 9:15 AM

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of SB 2787 SD2**. This bill establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit.

During the pandemic, non-profit organizations like ours worked hard to help limited English proficiency (LEP) families in Hawai'i access the pandemic relief benefits that they were qualified for. While working on this outreach, we learned that our state departments lack resources to provide meaningful language access for LEP families, and that the federal government does not provide translations of key documents¹ in many of the languages that are the most spoken by LEP families in Hawai'i² – such as Ilocano, Marshallese, Tongan and Chuukese.

Unfortunately, our state more recently learned about the lack of resources to address the language needs of Hawai'i's residents in the aftermath of the Lahaina wildfires. According to the language services coordinator for FEMA, who coordinated language access response after both the Lahaina and Paradise, California, fires, "the diverse cultures of Maui and the fact that many people did not feel comfortable dealing with government agencies, made the response in Lahaina unique."³

The unit proposed by this bill would help fill such gaps. It could offer services such as English language training, translation and interpretation, workforce development training, legal services, assistance in obtaining citizenship and naturalization, and programs to learn about and access government services. This unit would also coordinate with nonprofit organizations, other immigrant-serving state agencies, and county immigrant services offices and explore all available federal resources.

As one of the states with the highest portion of foreign-born residents,⁴ combined with the lack of resources for translations into many of the languages that are spoken most here, Hawai'i needs to devote more resources to language access than other states do.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,
Nicole Woo, Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/translated-applications>

² Hawai'i Data Exchange Partnership, https://hawaiiidxp.org/quick_data/datastory/el

³ <https://www.civilbeat.org/2024/03/people-who-dont-speak-english-lost-money-and-help-in-lahaina-response/>

⁴ Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/312701/percentage-of-population-foreign-born-in-the-us-by-state/>

KAIBIGAN NG LAHAINA



March 13, 2024

LATE

Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair

Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice-Chair

Members of the House Committee on Labor & Government Operations

Re: S.B. 2787, S.D. 2 – Relating to Immigration

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice-Chair Garrett and Members of the Committee on Labor & Government Operations,

Kaibigan ng Lahaina is a community organization established after the August 8, 2023, Lahaina Wildfires with the mission to promote and facilitate the relief, recovery and revitalization of the Filipino community in Lahaina. We are the only Filipino-based organization established in the wake of the wildfire to comprise of Lahaina residents. We would like to offer testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of S.B. 2787, S.D. 2.

Immigrants in Lahaina are facing daunting circumstances in wake of the August 2023 wildfire. As we attempt to grasp the long-standing challenges that face our community, we must dedicate special attention to how these challenges affect our immigrant community members, many of whom play important contributing roles in the economic and social fabric of Lahaina. With nearly half of the Lahaina community being of Filipino descent and the multi-ethnic make up of our community including Tongan, Samoan, Latino, Micronesian, Vietnamese immigrants and others, we fully understand that the proposal in this bill is designed to assist immigrants in economic self-sufficiency and community integration. The rebuilding of Lahaina cannot be achieved without these individuals and families and by empowering their ability to sustain livelihoods in Lahaina, not only do you help to enrich the quality of our community but within the state as well.

Many immigrants bring forth valuable contributions not only in the aspect of economy through the tourism, hospitality and services industries; but also, we are formidable in attempts to bring forth unity, diversity and compassion through our cultural heritages. Facilitating these programs that will aide immigrants to become contributors to communities is vital for the long-term successes in our state and we attest this is a necessary component for Lahaina's recovery. Many immigrants relocate to Lahaina in search of greater opportunities, and we have personally seen how our immigrant population has positively affected our town. Immigrant groups and entrepreneurs who provided immediate aide to feed and support our community immediately after the fires were evident and welcomed as we grappled with the urgent need for these necessities. We have witnessed so much gratitude and graciousness from immigrant businesses and organizations and it is our belief that services that support their successes ultimately leads to the success our town, our county and the entire state of Hawaii. Yet so many do not receive the assistance and services they need and proceed under

the radar due to fears of deportation, exclusion, condescension and financial unviability. We are fully aware of the overwhelming challenges recovery in Lahaina is facing and recognize these challenges are exponentially arduous for our immigrant community members. Support as proposed in S.B. 2787 would greatly benefit our community and relieve the weight of uncertainty for many.

Therefore, we heartily support this measure, asking for the passage of S.B. 2787.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this crucial measure. Please excuse the late submittal.

Sincerely,

Debbie Andres-Arellano

Eric Arquero

Ryan Corpuz

Sieny Corpuz

Cindy Lulu

Tiffany Somera

Nestor Ugale, Jr.

Board Members for Kaibigan ng Lahaina



SB-2787-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 9:28:23 PM

Testimony for LGO on 3/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and members of the House Committee on Labor & Government Operations,

I strongly SUPPORT SB2787 SD2. Immigration access to our government resources is both critical and equitable.

Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2787-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2024 11:15:33 PM

Testimony for LGO on 3/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and Members of the Committee,

As the child of refugees and contributing citizen, I write in **STRONG SUPPORT** of SB2787 SD2, which establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit.

With immigrants comprising eighteen percent of Hawai'i's population, the state must take proactive measures to support their integration. The need for comprehensive services for immigrants is evident, considering the various issues they encounter upon arrival, ranging from language access and legal matters to acculturation challenges and employment searches. Hawai'i has a significant number of new immigrants every year, as well as 18 percent of the population comprising immigrants, who have played an essential role in contributing to the state's economy, workforce, and community. The proposed Immigration Services and Access Unit will play a pivotal role in addressing the diverse needs of immigrants, including English language training, legal services related to immigration status, and support for accessing government services.

In both my professional and personal life, I have witnessed the many needs of our immigrant communities, as well as the significant contributions they make to our local communities, both financially and culturally.

Mahalo for your thoughtful consideration of this bill.

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)

SB-2787-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 6:33:03 AM

Testimony for LGO on 3/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Crystal Kionia	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB2787, which establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit.

As a proud first-generation immigrant residing in Hawaii, I intimately understand the challenges faced by immigrant families navigating the complexities of a new country. Like many children of immigrants, I have often found myself serving as the bridge between my family and the broader community, whether it be interpreting during medical appointments, school meetings, or accessing essential services. These experiences underscore the urgent need for dedicated support systems tailored to the unique needs of immigrants and their families.

With immigrants comprising eighteen percent of Hawaii's population, the state must take proactive measures to support their integration. The need for comprehensive services for immigrants is evident, considering the various issues they encounter upon arrival, ranging from language access and legal matters to acculturation challenges and employment searches. Hawaii has a significant number of new immigrants every year, as well as 18 percent of the population comprising immigrants, who have played an essential role in contributing to the state's economy, workforce, and community. The proposed Immigration Services and Access Unit will play a pivotal role in addressing the diverse needs of immigrants, including English language training, legal services related to immigration status, and support for accessing government services.

In conclusion, I urge you to lend your unwavering support to SB2787. By doing so, we not only affirm our commitment to the values of inclusivity and equality but also lay the groundwork for a more prosperous and harmonious future for all residents of Hawaii.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the successful passage of SB2787.

Thank you for your support and consideration.

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2787
RELATING TO IMMIGRATION**
COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair
Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 14, 2024

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB2787, which establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit.

As a first-generation immigrant, I intimately understand the challenges of adapting to a new country, especially when unforeseen crises arise, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the pandemic hit, I was working at a restaurant where many of my coworkers, predominantly immigrants who had arrived in the United States within the last five years, suddenly found themselves unemployed. Unfortunately, most were unaware of their eligibility for unemployment benefits. Recognizing this, I took it upon myself to educate them about the available resources and guide them through the application process. I assisted them with navigating the online system, understanding their claims, and provided ongoing support. This proactive intervention proved crucial in preventing financial insecurity and helping them stay afloat during uncertain times.

With immigrants comprising eighteen percent of Hawaii's population, the state must take proactive measures to support their integration. The need for comprehensive services for immigrants is evident, considering the various issues they encounter upon arrival, ranging from language access and legal matters to acculturation challenges and employment searches. Hawaii has a significant number of new immigrants every year, as well as 18 percent of the population comprising immigrants, who have played an essential role in contributing to the state's economy, workforce, and community.

This experience underscores the pressing need for a dedicated office to support immigrant services. Many immigrants, like my coworkers, lack awareness of the assistance programs and benefits accessible to them. Establishing a centralized hub where they can access accurate information and receive tailored support would be invaluable. Given our state's significant immigrant population, it is essential to cultivate a welcoming and inclusive environment that empowers immigrants and fosters their integration into their new communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the successful passage of SB2787.

Thank you for your support and consideration,
Maria Rallojaj

SB-2787-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 8:46:52 AM

Testimony for LGO on 3/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Iris Mendoza	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

estimony in SUPPORT of SB2787

RELATING TO IMMIGRATION

COMMITTEE ON LABOR & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 14, 2024

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB2787, which establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit.

With immigrants comprising eighteen percent of Hawaii's population, the state must take proactive measures to support their integration. The need for comprehensive services for immigrants is evident, considering the various issues they encounter upon arrival, ranging from language access and legal matters to acculturation challenges and employment searches. Hawaii has a significant number of new immigrants every year, as well as 18 percent of the population comprising immigrants, who have played an essential role in contributing to the state's economy, workforce, and community. The proposed Immigration Services and Access Unit will play a pivotal role in addressing the diverse needs of immigrants, including English language training, legal services related to immigration status, and support for accessing government services.

First and foremost, I want to emphasize the importance of recognizing the invaluable contributions that immigrants make to Hawai'i. Whether they come to our state seeking refuge from conflict and persecution, pursuing educational opportunities, or simply striving for a better life for themselves and their families, immigrants enrich our Hawai'i communities in countless ways. By establishing dedicated services within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, we can ensure that immigrants have the support and resources they need to thrive and contribute positively to our society and to be more self sufficient

Furthermore, I believe that the establishment of the Immigration Services and Access will play a vital role in promoting economic prosperity and social cohesion. By providing immigrants with access to essential services such as legal assistance, job training, and educational opportunities, we can empower them to fully integrate into our society and contribute to our economy. Moreover, by fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for immigrants, we can strengthen the fabric of our communities and promote unity among all residents, regardless of their background or immigration status.

I am particularly impressed by the comprehensive approach outlined in Bill SB2787, which not only seeks to provide immigrants with immediate support and assistance but also aims to address the root causes of immigration and promote long-term solutions. By investing in programs that address issues such as poverty, inequality, and lack of access to education and healthcare, we can create a more just and equitable society for all residents, regardless of their immigration status.

In conclusion, I urge you to support Bill SB2787 and to take decisive action to ensure its passage. By establishing the Immigration Services and Access within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services, we can send a powerful message that our state values and welcomes immigrants and is committed to supporting their success and well-being. Together, we can build a brighter future for all residents of our state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the successful passage of SB2787.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Iris Mendoza

SB-2787-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 9:01:01 AM

Testimony for LGO on 3/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Liza Ryan Gill	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair Matayoshi and Vice Char Garrett,

I strongly support SB2787.

This issue has been close to my heart for a long time. When a group of local advocates started to refound the Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights at the beginning of COVID-19 we did so because we knew that the roughly 18% of our state population that is foreign-born would face significant challenges in navigating a rapidly changing health crisis. We also knew that the state agencies and departments charged with serving them would face similar hurdles in meeting their needs adequately.

Since that time we have evolved and grown to represent more than 30 immigrant-serving and led organizations. We have also now jumped in and provided services and support in our second disaster, the Maui wildfires. We hope that we can always respond to the kahea, when we are needed. What would make our work easier though, is a state office that is dedicated to growing the capacity and services provided by scrappy networks like our own.

We are supporting these positions at the Office of Community Service because we see the need for a coordinated, holistic approach to the specific needs of our foreign-born residents. Most of these individuals are working in our visitor, agricultural and healthcare industries. They are well poised to take on more meaningful or higher paid jobs but their English skills, lack of U.S. citizenship or need to translate/tranfer their foreign professional license to an American equivalent, is holding them and Hawaii back from achieving our collective potential. These positions would help provide the needed structure and "whole of government" approach to addressing issues that impact tens of thousands of Hawaii residents. With just a little support these workers could gain the skills that have kept them in low-wage jobs for years or decades.

We urge the committee to look at the more than 30 state, city and county offices that exist around the country to offer this same direction and coordination.

Mahalo for your support and consideration of this measure.

Liza Ryan Gill

SB-2787-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 9:07:38 AM

Testimony for LGO on 3/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Austin Haleyalpiy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Matayoshi, Vice Chair Garrett, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB2787, which establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit.

With immigrants comprising eighteen percent of Hawaii's population, the state must take proactive measures to support their integration. The need for comprehensive services for immigrants is evident, considering the various issues they encounter upon arrival, ranging from language access and legal matters to acculturation challenges and employment searches. Hawaii has a significant number of new immigrants every year, as well as 18 percent of the population comprising immigrants, who have played an essential role in contributing to the state's economy, workforce, and community. The proposed Immigration Services and Access Unit will play a pivotal role in addressing the diverse needs of immigrants, including English language training, legal services related to immigration status, and support for accessing government services.

As a child of immigrant parents, I have seen firsthand the struggles and the long lasting effects decisions made when going through these struggles have not just on those immigrants but their families and potentially future generations to come. My family struggled, but we weren't as bad as some of my extended family members. What helped was that my parents came out to the US to further their education. They were offered scholarships and so that along with whatever other financial assistance they could find, helped pay for their tuition. These resources though were not laid out for them. They had to rely on the help of good willed individuals who looked out for them. That was back in the early 1990s and we are in far different times, but the intent of this bill carries that same goodwill as those who were their for my parents years ago. Just because times change, our good conscious and humanity should not have to compromise. It would be to the benefit of the entire community for those who want to join have a chance to integrate properly and make meaningful contributions to society.

I am particularly impressed by the comprehensive approach outlined in Bill SB2787, which not only seeks to provide immigrants with immediate support and assistance but also aims to address the root causes of immigration and promote long-term solutions. By investing in programs that address issues such as poverty, inequality, and lack of access to education

and healthcare, we can create a more just and equitable society for all residents, regardless of their immigration status.

In conclusion, I urge you to support Bill SB2787 and to take decisive action to ensure its passage. By establishing the Immigration Services and Access within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services, we can send a powerful message that our state values and welcomes immigrants and is committed to supporting their success and well-being. Together, we can build a brighter future for all residents of our state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the successful passage of SB2787.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Austin Haleyalpiy

SB-2787-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 9:47:44 AM

Testimony for LGO on 3/14/2024 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dianne Deauna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha members of the LGO Committee,

I'm writing in full support of SB 2787 SD2, which establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services and Access Unit. As a Filipino immigrant, this would help me and my kababayans obtain full access to government services which we are qualified for, and also allow us to fully participate in civic society here in Hawai'i.