
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 or obtain legal status and citizenship in the
3 country. However, the immigration court process is highly
4 complex, which may be intimidating or overwhelming for
5 immigrants who may struggle with navigating a different culture
6 and language. Many immigrants face barriers to obtaining legal
7 status and citizenship. Low-income immigrants often lack the
8 resources to obtain legal representation, which may have a
9 profound impact on the immigrants' ability to receive a fair
10 hearing.

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



1 multicultural community and make extensive contributions to the
2 State.

3 Given the current political climate, a significant number
4 of low-income immigrants are at risk of being detained or
5 deported. Therefore, there are vital public policy reasons
6 behind providing legal counsel to immigrants in immigration
7 proceedings.

8 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
9 funds to the department of labor and industrial relations,
10 office of community services to contract with non-profit
11 providers to provide low-income immigrants with legal counsel to
12 assist and represent them in immigration proceedings and provide
13 assistance on immigrant status issues.

14 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$150,000 or so much
16 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 for the
17 department of labor and industrial relations, office of
18 community services to contract with non-profit providers to
19 provide low-income immigrants with legal counsel to assist and
20 represent them in immigration proceedings and provide assistance
21 on immigrant status issues.



H.B. NO. 1976

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

3 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2020.
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INTRODUCED BY:

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JAN 17 2020



H.B. NO. 1976

Report Title:

DLIR; Immigrants; Immigration Proceedings; Legal Counsel;
Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Office of Community Services to contract with non-profit service providers for legal counsel to assist and represent low-income immigrants in immigration proceedings and immigrant status issues. Appropriates funds.

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