

**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**

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**Testimony COMMENTING on SB 812
RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES**

SENATOR SHARON Y. MORIWAKI, CHAIR
SENATOR CHRIS LEE, VICE CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY

Hearing Date: 2/6/2023

Room Number: Conf. Room 224

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

3 **Agency Testimony:** The Office of Language Access (OLA) appreciates the intent of this
4 measure, provided the measure's passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities in the
5 Governor's Budget Request and offers the following comments.

6 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this measure is to establish and appropriate funds for
7 an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services (OCS) to
8 promote economic self-sufficiency, inclusion, and community integration for immigrants by
9 improving access to appropriate services.

10 Hawaii is one of the most culturally diverse states and has one of the highest proportions of non-
11 English speakers in the nation. Many of these non-English speakers are immigrants and
12 migrants with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-
13 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, an estimate of 25.9% or 353,663 of
14 Hawaii residents, 5 years and older, speak a language other than English at home. Of those,
15 152,929 or 11.2% indicated that they speak English "less than very well."

16 English proficiency (or a lack of) has a great impact on people's economic and social activities,
17 and health literacy and wellness. It effects their ability to successfully access education,

1 employment, and important public assistance, benefits, programs and services. An immigrant
2 services and access unit will provide a critical link to communication and make services
3 accessible to individuals with LEP.

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

8 Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNTSMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

JOVANIE DOMINGO DELA CRUZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'ŌIHANA PONO LIMAHANA
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IN REPLY, REFER TO:
OCS 23.1045

February 3, 2023

To: The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Chair,
The Honorable Chris Lee, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Technology

Date: Monday, February 6, 2023

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Place: Conference Room 224, State Capitol & Videoconference

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

Position: Support

Re: S.B. 812 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

S.B. 812 would create a unit within the Office of Community Services (OCS), to be named the “Immigrant services and access unit” to promote economic self-sufficiency, inclusion, and community integration for immigrants in Hawaii by improving their access to appropriate services, resources, and benefits.

The unit would offer services that would include English language training; translation and interpretation; workforce development training; legal services; assistance in obtaining citizenship and naturalization; and programs to assist in learning about and accessing government services.

The bill directs that the unit would coordinate with non-profit organizations, and with support from grant funds, provide for direct services to immigrants. The unit would coordinate with other State and county agencies that serve immigrants, the unit would explore all available federal resources, including grants; and it would establish an advisory committee with representatives from immigrant communities, organizations that serve immigrants, and appropriate State and county agencies.

S.B. 812 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES

February 3, 2023

Page 2

Services would be available to immigrants, refugees, citizens of the nations that are in free association with the United States – namely the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau, undocumented persons, and other persons regardless of their immigration status.

The bill would appropriate funds for this unit and would provide funding for staff: two FTE positions – coordinator and clerical positions for FY 2023-2024; and five FTE positions for State FY 2024-2025 – one coordinator, one clerical position, and three specialists.

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.

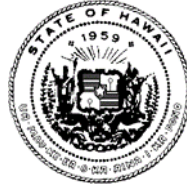
III. COMMENTS ON THE SENATE BILL

OCS supports the intent of this bill. S.B. 812 would reinforce the mandate that OCS already has pursuant to HRS Chapter 371K to provide many of the same programs as are listed in Section (a)(1) of the proposed new section in Chapter 371K. We wish to clarify and emphasize that the Office of Community Services is not a direct services agency. OCS contracts with non-profit organizations to provide direct services to program beneficiaries, under oversight by OCS. OCS administers relevant and appropriate federal programs "off the shelf", and OCS designs new programs for which it seeks to obtain funding from the State and potentially other sources.

OCS would like to offer an amendment with respect to Section 2 of the bill, which lists the functions of the immigrant services and access unit, OCS requests that an additional function be added, "Oversee and monitor the Immigrant Resource Centers program."

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

February 5, 2023

TO: The Honorable Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Chair
Senate Committee on Labor & Technology

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 812 – RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES.**

Hearing: Monday, February 6, 2023, 3:00 p.m.
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this measure and defers to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.

PURPOSE: The bill's purpose is to establish and appropriate moneys for an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services (OCS).

Immigrants in Hawaii are vital members of the community and 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 the unfortunate elements of society who prey on vulnerable individuals and immigrants.

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.



Committee on Labor and Technology
Monday February 6, 2023 @ 3pm Rm 224
Testimony in support of SB 812
RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES
Submitted by Hawai`i Friends of Civil Rights,
Co-chairs: Amy Agbayani and Pat McManaman

Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Lee and members

Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights strongly support SB 812 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES. SB 812 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 are requesting four amendments that will allow the Immigrant Services and Access unit authority and flexibility to identify and provide various appropriate and comprehensive services.

Section 2, Page 5, Line 3: change the word "shall" to "may"

Section 2, Page 5, Line 4: The line should read "Offer services, including but not limited to:"

Section 2, Page 6, Line 3: The line should read "Oversee and monitor the Immigrant Resource Center Program"

Section 2, Page 6, Line 4 change the word "shall" to "may"

This bill is included in the 2023 Filipino Legislative caucus package. We appreciate the legislature's past support of the Filipino Legislative Caucus priorities: HCR 169 (2021) and SB 2457(2022). 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 include our amendments and strongly support SB 812. This bill 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. 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.

We believe an Immigrant Services and Access unit will improve OCS's capacity to increase and improve services to serve the immigrant community who face barriers to accessing government resources and are excluded from full participation in our community. We respectfully ask you to approve SB 812 with included recommended amendments.

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



THE FILIPINO COMMUNITY CENTER, INC.

94-428 Mokuola St., Suite 302 Waipahu, Hawai'i 96797 Phone: 680-0451 Fax: 680-7510 www.filcom.org

Our mission is to develop, own and operate a community center that provides social, economic and education services and to promote and perpetuate Filipino culture and customs in the State of Hawai'i.

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
Monday, February 6, 2023, at 3:00 pm

By
Edmund Aczon
Chair, Board of Directors
The Filipino Community Center

SB 812 – RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Lee and members of the committee:

The Filipino Community Center **supports** SB 812 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES. SB 812 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 are requesting four amendments that will allow the Immigrant Services and Access unit authority and flexibility to identify and provide various appropriate and comprehensive services.

Section 2, Page 5, Line 3: change the word "shall" to "may"

Section 2, Page 5, Line 4: The line should read "Offer services, including but not limited to:"

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Section 2, Page 6, Line 4 change the word "shall" to "may"



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB812
RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki , Chair
Senator Chris Lee , Vice Chair**

Hearing Date: February 6th, 2023

Dear Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) is in full **support** of SB812, which establishes and appropriates moneys for an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services.

As an organization representing more than 25 immigrant-serving/led nonprofits across the state, we support SB812 because it recognizes the valuable contributions that immigrants make to Hawai'i and acknowledges the barriers they face in accessing government services and participating fully in their communities.

The state of Hawai'i has one of the highest ratios of foreign-born individuals per capita in the country but we lack many of the systems and services that states such as Washington, California, Illinois or New York have. While our population size is much smaller than these states, with coordinated effort we could better serve and support our immigrant residents to contribute even more fully to our collective economic, civic, and political life.

SB812 establishes an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services. This unit would 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.

We are requesting the following amendments to the bill that will allow the Immigrant Services and Access unit authority and flexibility to identify and provide various appropriate and comprehensive services.



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hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

Section 2, Page 5, Line 3: change the word “shall” to “may”

Section 2, Page 5, Line 4: The line should read “Offer services, including but not limited to:”

Section 2, Page 6, Line 3: The line should read “Oversee and monitor the Immigrant Resource Center Program”

Section 2, Page 6, Line 4 change the word “shall” to “may”

SB812 is necessary to ensure that all Hawaii's immigrants have equal access to government programs and services.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liza Ryan Gill".

Liza Ryan Gill

Coordinator/Refounder, Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

LATE

SB-812

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 9:37:35 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/6/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary K Ochs	Testifying for Hawai'i Workers Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We strongly support funding for an immigrant resources unit.



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB812 - RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR and TECHNOLOGY
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Chair
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair
, February 6 2023 | 3:00 pm | Conference Room 224

LATE

Aloha Chair Moriwaki, Chair Lee, and Members of the Committee,

The Legal Clinic (“TLC”) submits testimony in **SUPPORT of SB812**, which establishes and appropriates moneys and positions for an Immigrant Services and Access unit within the Office of Community Services, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. This unit would be responsible for coordinating constituent connection to resources such as language services, workforce development training, and legal services—such as assistance with obtaining citizenship. The unit would also offer public 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 to explore all available federal resources.

We recommend the following amendments to the bill language:

Section 2, Page 5, Line 6: Should read “immigrants, migrants, and refugees by improving” instead of “immigrants by improving”

Section 2, Page 5, Line 7: Should read “The immigrant services and access unit may” instead of “The immigrant services and access unit shall”:

Section 2, Page 5, (1): The line should read “Offer services, including but not limited to:”

Section 2, Page 6, (5)(b)(3) should read “Migrants including residents of the Compact of Free Association (COFA) nations residing in Hawai’i”

These amendments would enable the new unit to identify various relevant services through community partnerships (as well as independently) and includes migrants in the population the unit would serve.

TLC provides immigration legal services to Hawai’i’s low-income immigrant and migrant communities, to help keep families unified, and to promote residents’ economic self-sufficiency, longer-term security, and civic engagement. As an organization that witnesses first-hand the struggles of the state’s growing immigrant community, TLC supports SB812 because it recognizes the valuable contributions that immigrants make to Hawai’i and the barriers they face in accessing government services and participating fully in their communities. In Hawai’i where nearly one in five residents are born abroad, only Hawai’i County and Maui County have offices of immigrant services, both under-resourced and understaffed.

According to the 2020 Census, immigrants (those born outside the United States) make up over 18% of Hawai’i’s population (273,012 of our residents). This is compared to 13.7% of the U.S. population. Moreover, of our foreign-born population, over 41% (112,050) have not yet naturalized and become U.S. citizens. Hawai’i is also home to another migrant community in need of services, that being the residents from the states comprising the Compact of Free Association (“COFA”)—the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Palau. These residents are entitled to migrate to the U.S. under the Compact, which has its origins in the United States’ use of these countries for nuclear testing and other military purposes. An estimated 18,500 COFA nationals live in Hawai’i, and they are believed to make up the fastest growing portion of our migrant community.

Low-income immigrant communities were disproportionately impacted by the lasting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many experienced job losses, lower rates of healthcare coverage, less access to unemployment insurance and other public benefits due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with the system, and much more. It is clear to TLC that designated State-level positions focused on the unique needs of immigrants and migrants (COFA), including language access, integration (social, civic), legal status adjustments, and other services, would make a significant difference in addressing these barriers that migrants face, leveling the playing field for those who need assistance navigating complex processes and

systems. Furthermore, nonprofit service providers who work directly with immigrants and migrants would benefit from the Office's assistance with coordinating immigrant-serving partners and connecting to federal resources.

Passage of SB812 is necessary to ensure that all of Hawai'i's immigrants have equal access to government programs and services, and awareness of community resources that can put them on a path to increased security, well-being, and civic engagement .

Mahalo nui for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bettina Mok". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bettina" and the last name "Mok" clearly distinguishable.

Bettina Mok
Executive Director, The Legal Clinic
director@thelegalclinchawaii.org

SB-812

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 1:44:35 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/6/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB812.

SB-812

Submitted on: 2/5/2023 3:42:03 PM

Testimony for LBT on 2/6/2023 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Lee and members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Technology,

I am in strong support of SB812. This new unit within the OCS is essential for ensuring that immigrants in Hawai'i have access to the resources they need.

Mahalo.

LATE

SB-812

Submitted on: 2/6/2023 10:26:35 AM

Testimony for LBT on 2/6/2023 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
wilfredo tungol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Labor and Tech Committee:

I am testifying in strong support of this bill.

I am a former vice-president and board member of Hawaii Justice Immigration Center (fka Ns Loi'o Legal Services for over 10 years and I am very familiar with the immigration population in Hawaii and their need for services.

Hawaii has one of the largest immigrstion population per capita in the country. For most recent immigrants, language is a problem. Related to this is the ability to access help that may help immigrants to successfully integrate into our society. Immigrants are not a drain to our society as some critics may claim. They are human resources that help our society economically and socially.

This bill provides a hands up, NOT a hand out by helping newly arrived immigrants to services that will help them find jobs, social services, health services and other needed services that they otherwise may not know how to access. It is important that there be a resource agency in each of the major county that can assis them. By doing so, recent immigrants can be an asset to our community and contribute to our local economy. This is especially true with our current labor shortage in in the hospitality and tourism industry, health and elderly care services.

Please act favorably by passing this measure.

Mahalo,

Wilfredo Tungol