
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO IMMIGRATION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there is an
2 unfulfilled need in the State for broad-based, dedicated
3 services for recent immigrants to assist them with issues
4 relating to language access; legal issues relating to their
5 status as immigrants; acculturation with respect to legal
6 responsibilities, employment responsibilities, family matters,
7 and other acculturation issues; employment searches; support for
8 their children's education; access to health care; inclusion and
9 civic engagement; and a myriad of other challenges and
10 opportunities.

11 The legislature also finds that Hawaii has a long history
12 of welcoming immigrants. Immigrants and their children have
13 made, and continue to make, significant contributions to the
14 State, including the State's economy, workforce, and community.

15 The legislature further finds that immigrants comprise two
16 hundred seventy thousand persons, or eighteen per cent, of
17 Hawaii's population, including 145,000 persons who are



1 naturalized citizens. Immigrants come to Hawaii from many
2 countries; almost half of all immigrants in the State come from
3 the Philippines. Immigrants make up forty per cent of
4 agricultural workers, thirty-three per cent of tourism and
5 hospitality workers, and twenty-three per cent of health care
6 workers in the State.

7 The legislature further finds that other states provide
8 immigrant and refugee services through state-funded offices with
9 dedicated staff and program funds for immigrant integration.
10 These offices also coordinate with other government and
11 community agencies and apply for federal resources. This type
12 of office exists in Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, and New
13 York. In California, the department of social services has an
14 immigrant services bureau that ensures the effective development
15 and implementation of programs to support legal services,
16 outreach, community education, and other integration efforts.
17 Many cities across the nation, including Los Angeles, San
18 Francisco, and Seattle have also established comprehensive,
19 government-funded offices for immigrant and refugee affairs.
20 Many of these offices provide funds for English language
21 training, translation and interpretation, workforce development,



1 and legal services related to immigration status,
2 naturalization, and accessing government services. In Hawaii,
3 the counties of Maui and Hawaii have offices offering limited
4 services, but there are none in the county of Kauai or the city
5 and county of Honolulu.

6 Pursuant to H.C.R. No. 169 (2021), the legislature convened
7 a working group to "improve access to government services for
8 immigrants and increase immigrant opportunities to make civic
9 and economic contributions to the community." As part of the
10 working group, community groups identified the office of
11 community services as the best state agency to service
12 immigrants and suggested that the office be given dedicated
13 staff to address immigrant and refugee matters. In response,
14 Act 256, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022, provided \$1,000,000 to the
15 office of community services to reinstate immigrant resource
16 centers and to support nonprofit immigrant service agencies.
17 The legislature notes that in 1985, the office of community
18 services was established as an attached agency to the department
19 of labor and industrial relations. The legislative mandate of
20 the office of community services is to serve low-income
21 individuals, immigrants, and refugees.



1 The legislature believes that further action is needed to
2 support programs for Hawaii's immigrants and refugees, to
3 support immigrant services, and to ensure that new immigrants
4 have equal access to government services.

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to provide for
6 additional dedicated staff and additional program funds to allow
7 the office of community services to meet its full legislative
8 mandate, by establishing an immigration services and access unit
9 within the office of community services.

10 SECTION 2. Chapter 371K, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
11 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
12 and to read as follows:

13 "**§371K- Immigration services and access unit.** The
14 office of community services shall establish within the office a
15 unit to provide for immigration services and access through
16 program activities identified for immigration services and
17 access purposes. The purpose of the immigration services and
18 access unit shall be to promote immigrant economic self-
19 sufficiency, community inclusion, and integration. The
20 immigration services and access unit shall provide statewide
21 services, coordinate with relevant government and nonprofit



1 agencies, and approve contracts with qualified nonprofit
2 organizations to support integration and civic engagement. The
3 immigration services and access unit shall also be responsible
4 for the immigrant resource centers, administration of the
5 refugee program, and management of other programs relating to
6 immigrants."

7 SECTION 3. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of
8 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,
9 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the
10 appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,
11 and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure
12 ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by
13 \$ or per cent. This current declaration takes
14 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal
15 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act
16 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure
17 ceiling are that:

- 18 (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
19 serve the public interest; and
20 (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
21 addressed by this Act.



1 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 to
4 establish full-time equivalent (FTE) positions and
5 fund the immigrant services and access unit within the office of
6 community services.

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

9 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

10 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.



Report Title:

DLIR; Office of Community Services; Immigration and Services
Access Unit; Immigration; Positions; Expenditure Ceiling;
Appropriation

Description:

Establishes within the Department of Labor and Industrial
Relations' Office of Community Services the Immigration Services
and Access Unit. Declares that the general fund expenditure is
exceeded. Establishes positions. Makes an appropriation.
(SD1)

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not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

