S.B. NO. 3141

THE SENATE
THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE, 2020
STATE OF HAWAII

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LEGAL SERVICES FOR LOW-INCOME IMMIGRANTS.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that many immigrants seek to continue or obtain legal status and citizenship in the country. However, the immigration court process is highly complex, which may be intimidating or overwhelming for immigrants who may struggle with navigating a different culture and language. Many immigrants face barriers to obtaining legal status and citizenship. Low-income immigrants often lack the resources to obtain legal representation, which may have a profound impact on the immigrants' ability to receive a fair hearing.

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

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

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

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $150,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 for the department of labor and industrial relations, office of community services to contract with non-profit providers to provide low-income immigrants with legal counsel to assist and represent them in immigration proceedings and provide assistance on immigrant status issues.
The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of labor and industrial relations for the purposes of this Act.

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