

MAR 11 2021

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# SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS 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.

1 WHEREAS, immigrants have been an important part of the  
2 history of the State; are an integral part of Hawaii's diverse,  
3 multicultural community; and make extensive contributions as our  
4 neighbors, co-workers, employers, community leaders, and  
5 taxpayers; and

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7 WHEREAS, despite their value to our community, immigrants  
8 continue to face many barriers, including difficulty accessing  
9 government services and appropriately responding to government  
10 requirements to qualify for various services; and

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12 WHEREAS, in 2018, eighteen percent of the State's  
13 population, or 256,000 persons, were immigrants or foreign-born  
14 residents, and more than 145,000 persons were naturalized United  
15 States citizens; and

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17 WHEREAS, many immigrants live in households having United  
18 States citizens such as Hawaii-born children and American-born  
19 spouses, and the top six countries of birth for immigrants to  
20 Hawaii are the Philippines (sixty percent), Japan (eight  
21 percent), China (eight percent), Korea (seven percent),  
22 Micronesia (five percent), and Vietnam (three percent); further,  
23 about one-third of limited English-speaking persons are native  
24 speakers of the Filipino dialects Ilokano and Tagalog; and

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26 WHEREAS, immigrants are well-represented in the State's  
27 workforce, in sectors such as agriculture (forty percent),  
28 tourism and hospitality (thirty-three percent), and health care  
29 (twenty-three percent), and collectively contribute more than  
30 \$668 million in state and local taxes; and



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1           WHEREAS, foreign-born residents, particularly recent  
2 arrivals, often encounter discrimination and cultural  
3 misunderstanding and face other barriers to full inclusion and  
4 participation in society, partly due to limited knowledge of  
5 their rights and responsibilities and limited English-language  
6 ability, which in turn limits their access to government and  
7 other community-based resources; and

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9           WHEREAS, in 1985, four anti-poverty agencies administering  
10 state and federal funds -- the Progressive Neighborhoods  
11 Program, Hawaii Office of Economic Opportunity, Refugee  
12 Resettlement Program, and State Immigrant Services Center --  
13 were consolidated by the Legislature, which established in its  
14 place the Office of Community Services, an attached agency to  
15 the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations; and

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17           WHEREAS, as an office whose legislatively-mandated mission  
18 is to help low-income individuals and families, refugees, and  
19 immigrants to live healthier lives, achieve greater economic  
20 self-sufficiency, and increase their contributions to the State,  
21 the Office of Community Services is responsible for numerous  
22 statewide programs and provides millions of federal and state  
23 dollars to low-income communities for food, health services,  
24 employment services, and the like; and

25  
26           WHEREAS, the Office of Community Services' focus on, and  
27 funding for, services to immigrant and refugee communities has  
28 been seriously eroded, with nearly one hundred percent of  
29 staffing and funds currently being used for low-income  
30 communities but none for immigrant-specific services; and

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32           WHEREAS, many cities across the nation such as Seattle and  
33 San Francisco have established comprehensive government-funded  
34 offices for immigrant affairs, and by establishing the Office of  
35 Community Services, the Legislature acknowledged that immigrants  
36 and refugees need of targeted services; and

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38           WHEREAS, the Counties of Maui and Hawaii demonstrate their  
39 commitment by having full-time staff to assist immigrants, yet  
40 the City and County of Honolulu's current budget has funding for  
41 positions that promote increased immigrant access to City



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1 services, but no positions that have been established or filled;  
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WHEREAS, President Biden and congressional leaders have proposed significant changes in immigration policy and have also expressed support for immigration programs, creation of a National Office of New Americans, expanding access to citizenship, funding workforce development and English language learning programs, increasing access to justice and due process, and rebuilding the capacity and infrastructure of local communities to welcome refugees; and

WHEREAS, the State would be in a stronger position to gain access to new federal funding if the Office of Community Services is equipped to provide leadership and a renewed focus on responding to immigrant needs; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Community Services is the primary agency established by the Legislature to serve low-income immigrant and refugee communities, but currently has little to no focus on providing supportive services for these communities; however, with improved planning and support, the Office of Community Services can meet its statutory mandate to serve the immigrant and refugee communities; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, that the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations is urged 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; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Director of Labor and Industrial Relations is requested to convene the working group, to consist of the following members or their designees:

- (1) The Governor;
- (2) The Director of Labor and Industrial Relations;
- (3) The Executive Director of the Office of Community Services;



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- 1 (4) The Executive Director of the Office of Language
- 2 Access;
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- 4 (5) A representative from the Hawaii Coalition for
- 5 Immigrant Rights, by invitation of the Director of
- 6 Labor and Industrial Relations;
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- 8 (6) A representative from the Inter-Agency Council for
- 9 Immigrant Services, by invitation of the Director of
- 10 Labor and Industrial Relations; and
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- 12 (7) A representative from any other government entity or
- 13 community organization that the working group deems
- 14 relevant and appropriate; and
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16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested  
 17 to select one of its members to serve as chairperson; and  
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19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested  
 20 to submit a report of its findings and recommendations,  
 21 including any proposed legislation, no later than twenty days  
 22 prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2022; and  
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24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
 25 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor; Director of Labor and  
 26 Industrial Relations; Executive Director of the Office of  
 27 Community Services; Executive Director of the Office of Language  
 28 Access; Executive Director of the Hawaii Coalition for Immigrant  
 29 Rights; and President of the Inter-Agency Council for Immigrant  
 30 Services.  
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OFFERED BY: 

