

AN ACT

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The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

CHAPTER 1

PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

Section 101. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Office of New Americans Act.

Section 102. Legislative policy and declaration.

The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) According to the United States Census Bureau, Pennsylvania ranked 42 amongst the 50 states in population growth from April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2013, increasing only .56%.

(2) In 2012, Pennsylvania's 769,264 foreign-born individuals comprised 6% of the state's population, an increase of 1.9% since 2000.

(3) Throughout the Commonwealth's history immigrants have played a critical role in the State's economic, cultural, and political growth and success.

(4) Policies that promote the attraction, retention, and integration of immigrants will help enhance Pennsylvania's economy and diversity, thereby improving the lives of all citizens and helping to remove barriers that may undermine immigrants full potential.

(5) Immigrants currently fill skilled positions throughout Pennsylvania's economy and are a vital part of the State's economy and tax base.

(6) 36% of immigrants in PA have bachelor's or graduate degrees, compared to 26% of US-born Pennsylvanians.

(7) Organizations such as the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians and Vibrant Pittsburgh are providing leadership in the Commonwealth's immigrant integration efforts through programs and services that connect newcomers and longtime Pennsylvanians to economic opportunity.

(8) It is essential for Pennsylvania's future that skilled, energetic, and entrepreneurial immigrants are attracted and retained; their presence helps to bolster the state's economy and strengthen the social and cultural fabric.

(9) States enforce and provide for many services, licenses, and educational and economic opportunities that make it imperative to offer guidance to state government agencies and to immigrants on how to navigate these resources.

(10) The creation of an Office of New Americans will help to improve the lives of immigrants and Pennsylvanians generally by recognizing these facts and promoting these goals.

Section 103. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Advisory committee." The Advisory Committee to the Office of New Americans.

"Department." The Department of Community and Economic Development

"Office." The Office of New Americans

“Secretary.” The Secretary of the Department of Community and Economic Development

CHAPTER 3

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

Section 301. Establishment.

The Office of New Americans is established within the Department of Community and Economic Development.

Section 302. Powers and duties of office.

The office shall:

- (1) Respond to inquiries from state agencies, the media, immigrant-serving organizations, and the public about immigration issues in Pennsylvania.
- (2) Serve as point of contact for state licensing boards and the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs.
- (3) Serve as a clearinghouse of information for state agencies on immigration-related policy issues, and coordinate among agencies as appropriate.
- (4) Analyze economic and demographic trends and make policy recommendations.
- (5) Develop strategies to attract, retain, and incorporate immigrants into Pennsylvania.
- (6) Ensure that the Commonwealth is gathering relevant data to inform its policymaking on immigrant issues.
- (7) Convene stakeholders in business development and international trade promotion programs to increase their capacity to draw on immigrant contributors.
- (8) Disseminate information to new and prospective immigrant Pennsylvanians who wish to invest capital, launch businesses, or apply their skills in our Commonwealth.
- (9) Convene municipal officials to boost peer learning on immigration possibilities among third-class cities struggling with population loss and economic decline.
- (10) Convene colleges and universities to foster learning on strategies for immigrant and international student retention.
- (11) Provide matching grant funds for high-quality immigration and economic development programs that can demonstrate corporate or philanthropic investment.

(12) Evaluate success of activities and adjust course as appropriate.

CHAPTER 5

ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

Section 501. Establishment.

The Advisory Committee to the Office of New Americans is established within the Office of New Americans and shall serve in an advisory capacity to the office in matters regarding immigrants in this Commonwealth. The advisory committee shall be staffed and administered by the Office of New Americans.

Section 502. Membership.

(a) Public official members.--The advisory committee shall consist of the following members, who shall serve by virtue of their public position:

- (1) The Secretary of the Department of Community and Economic Development or a designee.
- (2) The Secretary of the Department of State or a designee.
- (3) The Secretary of the Department of Labor and Industry or a designee.
- (4) The Secretary of the Department of Education or a designee.
- (5) The Secretary of the Department of Public Welfare or a designee.
- (6) The Secretary of the Department of Health or a designee.
- (7) The Secretary of the Department of Transportation or a designee.
- (8) The Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police or a designee.

(b) Nongovernmental members.--The advisory committee shall consist of nongovernmental members to be appointed by the Governor as follows:

- (1) Two members from an organization that attracts, retains, and integrates immigrants into Pennsylvania society.
- (2) One member from the Pennsylvania chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.
- (3) One member from higher education that has a focus primarily on immigration issues.

- (4) One member from the Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce or a similar local advocate for economic improvement.
- (5) One member with expertise in accessing language resources for those that use English as a second language.
- (6) One member from the Pennsylvania banking sector.
- (7) One member from a work force training agency.
- (8) One member from the health care sector.
- (9) One member from the health insurance sector.
- (10) One member from human services agency.
- (11) One member from a refugee resettlement agency.

(c) Voting.--

- (1) All members appointed shall hold voting privileges on all matters brought up for consideration by the advisory committee.
- (2) A simple majority of those members with current appointments of the advisory committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business. An action adopted by the majority of the members present at any meeting in which there is a quorum shall be deemed to be an act of the advisory committee.

(d) Terms.--

- (1) The terms of the members under subsection (a) shall be concurrent with their holding of the public office.
- (2) Members appointed under subsection (b) shall serve three-year terms as long as they represent the interest of the membership class for which they were appointed, and shall serve until their successors are appointed.

(e) Chairperson.--The Secretary shall serve as chairperson of the advisory committee.

(f) Expenses of members.--Members of the advisory committee shall receive no compensation for their services. Members who are not employees of State government

shall be reimbursed at established Commonwealth rates for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties on the advisory committee.

Section 503. Powers and duties of advisory committee.

(a) General rule.--The advisory committee shall:

(1) Make recommendations to the Governor and the Secretary on policies, procedures, regulations and legislation that helps to attract, retain, and integrate immigrants into Pennsylvania society.

(2) Serve as the Governor's liaison to New Americans on policies, procedures, regulations and legislation that affect immigrants, in order to ensure that State government is accessible, accountable and responsive to their needs.

(3) Serve as a resource to all departments, commissions and agencies under the Governor's jurisdiction to ensure that these government entities are cognizant of the needs of immigrants and their respective services and programs are accessible to those individuals.

(4) Work with the office to monitor the practices of state agencies relating to the attraction, retention, and integration of immigrants in order to maximize the efficiency and accessibility to state government.

(5) Perform such other duties as the Governor and Secretary may assign in planning for services and programs for immigrants.

(b) Studies and reports.— The advisory committee may conduct studies and issue reports upon request and as it deems necessary on issues affecting immigrants in Pennsylvania.

(c) Public hearings. – The advisory committee shall conduct at least one public hearing each year to receive testimony and public comments on how state government can improve the attraction, retention, and integration of immigrants in the Commonwealth.

(d) Construction.--Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the advisory committee from establishing ad hoc work groups or local committees to assist in research and other duties necessary to carry out the mission of the office.

CHAPTER 7

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Section 701. Funding.

\$200,000 shall be appropriated from the General Fund for the operations of the office.

Section 702. Effective date.

This act shall take effect in 60 days.