

Department of Planning and Budget 2018 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. **Bill Number:** HB1461

House of Origin ☒ Introduced ☐ Substitute ☐ Engrossed
Second House ☐ In Committee ☐ Substitute ☐ Enrolled

2. **Patron:** Tran

3. **Committee:** Health, Welfare and Institutions

4. **Title:** Office of Immigrant Assistance created.

5. **Summary:** Establishes in the Department of Social Services an Office of Immigrant Assistance (the Office) to assist persons lawfully entering the United States and the Commonwealth for the purpose of becoming citizens. The Office shall provide (i) advice and assistance regarding the citizenship application process; (ii) assistance with finding and securing employment, housing, and services for which such persons may be eligible; (iii) information to localities about state programs that help such persons find and secure employment, housing, and services for which they may be eligible; and (iv) information to localities and immigrant service organizations regarding health epidemics and unlawful predatory actions, such as human trafficking, gang recruitment, and fraudulent financial and other schemes, to which communities of such persons may be especially vulnerable.

6. **Budget Amendment Necessary:** No. The Department of Social Services received appropriation and positions for an Office of Immigrant Assistance in the Governor's introduced Budget Bill.

7. **Fiscal Impact Estimates:**

7a. **Expenditure Impact:**

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Dollars</i>	<i>Positions</i>	<i>Fund</i>
2018	-	-	-
2019	\$440,830	2	General
2020	\$280,506	2	General
2021	\$280,506	2	General
2022	\$280,506	2	General
2023	\$280,506	2	General
2024	\$280,506	2	General

8. **Fiscal Implications:** Based on data from the United States Department of Homeland Security, there are an estimated 336,864 legally present immigrants in Virginia. This population would be eligible for services provided by the Office of Immigrant Assistance (OIA) as established by this legislation.

It is assumed that the OIA would work closely with the Office of Newcomer Services (ONS) and would coordinate and provide referrals for immigrant assistance, rather than providing direct services to immigrants. Currently, ONS provides assistance to persons from around the world who have been forced to flee their homeland because of wars, armed conflicts, or gross violations of civil rights. ONS already has an existing network of local service providers who provide citizenship services, language, housing and employment assistance, and who also understand the complexities of integrating the foreign born into Virginia communities. As such, there would be no additional cost to the Department for the services provided to refugees, those seeking asylum, Cuban/Haitian entrants, and unaccompanied refugee minors, who comprise about seven percent of the total immigrant population, since these populations are being helped through the ONS. This network can be expanded to include the immigrant population who will receive services under this bill.

The two main cost areas involved in establishing the Office of Immigrant Assistance are staffing expenses and the cost of a public outreach campaign. The Office of Newcomer Services is currently funded by the federal Refugee and Entrant Assistance grant. Due to the restrictive nature of this grant, these funds cannot be used to fund the OIA. It is estimated that two additional positions will be required to provide the online information and support aspect of the program. A program administration manager and a program administration specialist will be needed to operate the OIA. The program administration manager will provide in-house expertise on the needs of immigrants and the services available to them and the program administration specialist will monitor the quality of service delivered by local service providers, monitor online publications provided by the program, and work closely with the program administration manager to expand the network of local service providers providing employment and housing services. Based on current salaries for similar positions, an average salary of \$93,113 for the program administration manager and \$58,120 for the program administration specialist are projected. Therefore, total salaries, benefits and other operating costs are estimated at \$240,830 general fund in FY 2019 and \$230,506 general fund in FY 2020 and each year thereafter. There are no unobligated federal funds available for this program.

In order for the Office of Immigrant Assistance to reach its targeted population, a public outreach campaign is essential. The public outreach campaign would include, but not be limited to, public service announcements, pamphlets and publications, press releases, posters, graphic design, and market boards. Public outreach would need to be done in multiple languages given the targeted audience of immigrants seeking citizenship, thereby increasing the cost. It is estimated to cost approximately \$200,000 in the first year and \$50,000 each year thereafter to conduct a public outreach campaign in multiple languages for the targeted population.

This legislation could also potentially impact other agencies if their service populations increase due to referrals from DSS for employment, housing and other services.

9. Specific Agency or Political Subdivisions Affected: Department of Social Services

10. Technical Amendment Necessary: No.

11. Other Comments: None.