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HOUSE BILL NO. 1209

Offered January 8, 2020

Prefiled January 7, 2020

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding sections numbered 63.2-209.1 and 63.2-209.2, relating to Department of Social Services; Office of New Americans created.

Patrons—Tran, Keam, Kory and Samirah

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding sections numbered 63.2-209.1 and 63.2-209.2 as follows:

§ 63.2-209.1. Office of New Americans.

A. There is created in the Department an Office of New Americans (the Office) to assist immigrant integration within the Commonwealth on an economic, social, and cultural level. The current Office of Newcomer Services is continued and renamed as the Division of Newcomer Services and is a subdivision of the Office of New Americans.

B. The Office shall:

1. Implement a statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of new Americans in the Commonwealth;

2. Work with localities to coordinate and support local efforts that align with the statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of new Americans in the Commonwealth;

3. Provide advice and assistance to new Americans regarding (i) the citizenship application process and (ii) securing employment, housing, and services for which such persons may be eligible;

4. Provide advice and assistance to state agencies regarding (i) the coordination of relevant policies across state agencies responsible for education, workforce, and training programs, including professional licensure guidance, small business development, worker protection, refugee resettlement, citizenship and voter education or engagement programs, housing programs, and other related programs, and (ii) the dissemination of information to localities and immigration service organizations regarding state programs that help new Americans find and secure employment, housing, and services for which they may be eligible;

5. Educate localities and immigration service organizations on 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. Serve as the primary liaison with external stakeholders, particularly immigrant-serving and refugee-serving organizations and businesses, on immigrant integration priorities and policies;

7. Partner with state agencies, immigrant-serving and refugee-serving organizations and businesses to identify and disseminate beneficial immigrant integration policies and practices throughout the Commonwealth;

8. Manage competitive grant programs that replicate beneficial practices or test new innovations that improve the effectiveness and efficacy of immigrant integration strategies; and

9. Advise the Governor, Cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to improve state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of new Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

§ 63.2-209.2. Office of New Americans Advisory Board.

A. The Office of New Americans Advisory Board is hereby created and shall be composed of the following members serving ex officio: the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Chairmen of the Virginia-Asian Advisory Board, the Latino Advisory Board, the Virginia African American Advisory Board, and the Council on Women.

B. The purpose of the Office of New Americans Advisory Board shall be to advise the Director of the Office of New Americans on ways to improve state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of new Americans throughout the Commonwealth pursuant to subsection B of § 63.2-209.1.

C. The Board shall submit an annual report to the Director of the Office of New Americans on ways to improve state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of new Americans throughout the Commonwealth pursuant to subsection B of § 63.2-209.1. The Director shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual executive summary of the interim activity and work of the Board no later than the first day of each regular session of the General Assembly. The

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59 *executive summary shall be submitted as a report document as provided in the procedures of the*
60 *Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and*
61 *shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.*