

## Department of Planning and Budget 2017 Fiscal Impact Statement

**1. Bill Number:** SB1521

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

**2. Patron:** Ebbin

**3. Committee:** Rehabilitation and Social Services

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

**5. Summary:** Establishes in the Department of Social Services (the Department) 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 online (i) advice and assistance regarding the citizenship application process and (ii) information regarding employment and housing services for which such persons may be eligible. The bill provides that the Office shall be funded by such funds currently appropriated to the Department and any existing or available federal grants.

**6. Fiscal Implications:** This bill has an enactment clause that requires the Office to be funded by such funds currently appropriated to the Department and any existing or available federal grants. Should there be no available appropriation nor any available federal grants, the Department of Social Services would have to use appropriated funds from elsewhere in its budget.

**7. Fiscal Impact Estimates:** Preliminary. See Item 8.

**7a. Expenditure Impact:**

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Dollars</i>	<i>Positions</i>	<i>Fund*</i>
2017	-	-	-
2018	\$407,228	2	Indeterminate
2019	\$246,902	2	Indeterminate
2020	\$246,902	2	Indeterminate
2021	\$246,902	2	Indeterminate
2022	\$246,902	2	Indeterminate
2023	\$246,902	2	Indeterminate

*\*See Item 6.*

**8. Fiscal Implications:** There are an estimated 280,000 legally present immigrants in Virginia based on data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. This population would be eligible for services offered by the Office of Immigrant Assistance established by this legislation.

It is assumed that the Office of Immigrant Assistance (OIA) would be an extension of the Office of Newcomer Services (ONS) and would provide online advice and assistance for the citizenship application process and information regarding employment and housing services. 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 that provide citizenship services, language, housing, and employment assistance, and understand the complexities of integrating foreign born persons 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.

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. Using an average salary of \$70,124 for the program administration manager and \$55,646 for the program administration specialist, it is estimated that salaries, benefits and other operating costs for the Office will require \$207,228 in FY 2018; and \$196,902 in FY 2019 and each year thereafter.

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 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:**