

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2020 SESSION

CHAPTER 1078

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 24 of Title 2.2 an article numbered 28, consisting of sections numbered 2.2-2496 through 2.2-2499, and by adding a section numbered 63.2-209.1, relating to Department of Social Services; Office of New Americans created; Office of New Americans Advisory Board created.

[H 1209]

Approved April 10, 2020

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 24 of Title 2.2 an article numbered 28, consisting of sections numbered 2.2-2496 through 2.2-2499, and by adding a section numbered 63.2-209.1 as follows:

Article 28.

Office of New Americans Advisory Board.

§ 2.2-2496. Office of New Americans Advisory Board.

The Office of New Americans Advisory Board (the Board) is established as an advisory board, within the meaning of § 2.2-2100, in the executive branch of state government. The purpose of the Board is to 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.

§ 2.2-2497. Membership; terms; compensation and expenses.

A. The Board shall consist of 18 nonlegislative citizen members appointed by the Governor who represent or have experience with the faith community; local government; the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service; law-enforcement agencies; health, mental health, housing and workforce development organizations; organizations serving youth and the elderly; organizations providing legal services for immigrants; and educational institutions and institutions of higher education. In addition, the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the Commonwealth and the Chairmen of the Virginia-Asian Advisory Board, the Latino Advisory Board, the Virginia African American Advisory Board, and the Council on Women, or their designees, shall serve ex officio with nonvoting privileges. Nonlegislative citizen members of the Board shall be residents of the Commonwealth.

Ex officio members shall serve terms consistent with their terms of office.

B. After the initial staggering of terms, nonlegislative citizen members shall be appointed for a term of four years. Appointments to fill vacancies shall be for the unexpired terms. No nonlegislative citizen member shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms; however, the remainder of any term to which a member is appointed to fill a vacancy shall not constitute a term in determining the member's eligibility for reappointment.

C. The Board shall elect from its membership a chairman and vice-chairman. A majority of the members of the Board shall constitute a quorum. Meetings of the Board shall be limited to four per year and shall be held upon the call of the chairman or whenever the majority of the members so request.

D. Members of the Board shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813 and 2.2-2825.

§ 2.2-2498. Powers and duties; acceptance of gifts and grants.

A. The Board shall have the power and duty to:

1. Advise the Governor on ways to improve state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of new Americans throughout the Commonwealth;

2. Undertake studies, symposiums, research, and factual reports to gather information to formulate and present recommendations to the Governor related to issues of concern and importance to new Americans in the Commonwealth;

3. Advise the Governor as needed regarding any statutory, regulatory, or other issues of importance to new Americans in the Commonwealth;

4. Collaborate with the Department of Social Services and other public and private entities to recognize and call attention to the significant contributions of new Americans in the Commonwealth; and

5. Report annually by December 1 to the Governor and the General Assembly on the activities of the Office of New Americans and provide recommendations for improving state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of new Americans throughout the Commonwealth. The chairman of the Board 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 executive summary shall be submitted as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted to the General Assembly's website.

B. The Board may apply for, accept, and expend gifts, grants, or donations from public or private sources to enable it to carry out its objectives.

§ 2.2-2499. Staff; cooperation from other state agencies.

The Department of Social Services shall provide staff support to the Board. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Board, upon request.

§ 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.

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 and 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.

2. That the initial appointments by the Governor of nonlegislative citizen members of the Office of New Americans Advisory Board shall be staggered as follows: four members for a term of one year; four members for a term of two years; five members for a term of three years; and five members for a term of four years.