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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE BILL

No. 1466 Session of  
2014

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INTRODUCED BY FERLO, TEPLITZ, FONTANA, COSTA AND HUGHES,  
SEPTEMBER 15, 2014

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REFERRED TO COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,  
SEPTEMBER 15, 2014

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AN ACT

1 Establishing the Office of New Americans and fixing its powers  
2 and duties; and establishing the Advisory Committee to Office  
3 of New Americans and providing for its powers, duties and  
4 membership.

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

3 CHAPTER 1  
4 PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

5 Section 101. Short title.

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

8 Section 102. Legislative policy and declarations.

9 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

10 (1) According to the Census Bureau, Pennsylvania ranked  
11 42 amongst the 50 states in population growth from April 1,  
12 2010, to July 1, 2013, increasing only .56%.

13 (2) In 2012, Pennsylvania's 769,264 foreign-born  
14 individuals comprised 6% of this Commonwealth's population,  
15 an increase of 1.9% since 2000.

16 (3) Throughout this Commonwealth's history, immigrants  
17 have played a critical role in this Commonwealth's economic,  
18 cultural, and political growth and success.

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

24 (5) Immigrants currently fill skilled positions  
25 throughout this Commonwealth's economy and are a vital part  
26 of this Commonwealth's economy and tax base.

27 (6) Thirty-six percent of immigrants in this  
28 Commonwealth have a bachelor of arts, bachelor of science or  
29 graduate degree, compared to 26% of United-States-born  
30 Pennsylvanians.

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

6           (8) It is essential for this Commonwealth's future that  
7 skilled, energetic and entrepreneurial immigrants are  
8 attracted and retained. Their presence helps to bolster this  
9 Commonwealth's economy and strengthen the social and cultural  
10 fabric.

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

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

19 Section 103. Definitions.

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

23           "Advisory committee." The Advisory Committee to Office of  
24 New Americans.

25           "Department." The Department of Community and Economic  
26 Development of the Commonwealth.

27           "Office." The Office of New Americans.

28           "Secretary." The Secretary of Community and Economic  
29 Development of the Commonwealth.

30   CHAPTER 3

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

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Section 301. Establishment.

The Office of New Americans is established within the department.

Section 302. Powers and duties of office.

The office shall do all of the following:

(1) Respond to inquiries from Commonwealth agencies, the media, immigrant-serving organizations and the public about immigration issues in this Commonwealth.

(2) Serve as point of contact for Commonwealth licensing boards and the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs.

(3) Serve as an information clearinghouse for Commonwealth 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 this Commonwealth.

(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 residents of this Commonwealth who wish to invest capital, launch businesses or apply their skills in this Commonwealth.

(9) Convene municipal officials to boost peer learning on immigration possibilities among cities of the third class

1 struggling with population loss and economic decline.

2 (10) Convene college and university officials to foster  
3 learning on strategies for immigrant and international  
4 student retention.

5 (11) Provide matching grant funds for high-quality  
6 immigration and economic development programs that can  
7 demonstrate corporate or philanthropic investment.

8 (12) Evaluate success of activities and adjust courses  
9 as appropriate.

10 CHAPTER 5

11 ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO

12 OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

13 Section 501. Establishment.

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

19 Section 502. Membership.

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

23 (1) The secretary or a designee.

24 (2) The Secretary of Administration or a designee.

25 (3) The Secretary of Labor and Industry or a designee.

26 (4) The Secretary of Education or a designee.

27 (5) The Secretary of Public Welfare or a designee.

28 (6) The Secretary of Health or a designee.

29 (7) The Secretary of Transportation or a designee.

30 (8) The Commissioner of Pennsylvania State Police or a

1       designee.

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

5           (1) Two members from an organization that attracts,  
6 retains and integrates immigrants into this Commonwealth's  
7 society.

8           (2) One member from the Pennsylvania chapter of the  
9 American Immigration Lawyers Association.

10          (3) One member from an institution of higher education  
11 who has a primary focus on immigration issues.

12          (4) One member from the Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce  
13 or a similar local advocate for economic improvement.

14          (5) One member with expertise in accessing language  
15 resources for those who use English as a second language.

16          (6) One member from the Pennsylvania banking sector.

17          (7) One member from a work force training agency.

18          (8) One member from the health care sector.

19          (9) One member from the health insurance sector.

20          (10) One member from a human services agency.

21          (11) One member from a refugee resettlement agency.

22       (c) Voting.--

23           (1) All members appointed shall hold voting privileges  
24 on all matters brought up for consideration by the advisory  
25 committee.

26           (2) A simple majority of those members with current  
27 appointments of the advisory committee shall constitute a  
28 quorum for the transaction of any business. An action adopted  
29 by the majority of the members present at any meeting in  
30 which there is a quorum shall be deemed to be an act of the

1 advisory committee.

2 (d) Terms.--

3 (1) The terms of the members under subsection (a) shall  
4 be concurrent with their holding of the public office.

5 (2) Members appointed under subsection (b) shall serve  
6 three-year terms as long as they represent the interest of  
7 the membership class for which they were appointed, and shall  
8 serve until their successors are appointed.

9 (e) Chairperson.--The secretary shall serve as chairperson  
10 of the advisory committee.

11 (f) Expenses of members.--Members of the advisory committee  
12 shall receive no compensation for their services. Members who  
13 are not employees of State government shall be reimbursed at  
14 established Commonwealth rates for expenses incurred in the  
15 performance of their duties on the advisory committee.

16 Section 503. Powers and duties of advisory committee.

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

18 (1) Make recommendations to the Governor and the  
19 secretary on policies, procedures, regulations and  
20 legislation that helps to attract, retain and integrate  
21 immigrants into this Commonwealth's society.

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

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

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

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

8 (b) Studies and reports.--The advisory committee may conduct  
9 studies and issue reports upon request and as it deems necessary  
10 on issues affecting immigrants in this Commonwealth.

11 (c) Public hearings.--The advisory committee shall conduct  
12 at least one public hearing each year to receive testimony and  
13 public comments on how State government can improve the  
14 attraction, retention and integration of immigrants in this  
15 Commonwealth.

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

20 CHAPTER 7

21 MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

22 Section 701. Effective date.

23 This act shall take effect in 60 days.