

House Bill 961

State Government - Commission on New Americans – Established
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 28th 2024

Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore backs HB 961, which aims to create the Commission on New Americans. This commission would have the important job of studying and regularly reporting to the Governor and The General Assembly about how new Americans contribute to Maryland and how easy it is for them to access government services in the state.

For over a century, Catholic Charities has provided support to Marylanders in need, including new Americans. Our commitment to uplifting communities spans a myriad of services, from aiding individuals in their pursuit of employment and career advancement to providing vital support in healing from trauma and addiction. We stand as a beacon of hope, extending compassionate services to newcomers as they navigate the intricate landscape of life in a new country.

The Esperanza Center, our comprehensive resource hub, has been a lifeline for immigrants from diverse backgrounds since 1963. From education and healthcare to immigration legal matters and family reunification, our dedicated staff and volunteers help thousands of immigrants annually. **The Client Services team at Esperanza Center serves as a vital entry point for individuals, fielding over 5,000 inquiries annually and addressing a wide array of needs, from translations to benefits applications and beyond.** Every success story, from securing a job to keeping families united or enrolling a child in school, underscores the transformative impact of our services.

The establishment of the Commission on New Americans represents a proactive step towards addressing the needs and aspirations of immigrant and refugee communities. By meticulously studying and reporting on their contributions and the availability of essential services, the Commission can offer invaluable insights to policymakers, paving the way for more comprehensive support and integration strategies.

Moreover, HB 961 provides an opportunity to evaluate existing pathways and services, ensuring they align with the evolving needs of our immigrant population. **In a state where equal access to public services is not just a moral imperative but a legal right, this bill is a crucial stride towards fostering equity and inclusion for all Marylanders.**

For these reasons, Catholic Charities of Baltimore urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 961.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy.