



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: 2/15/2024

RE: HB961- State Government – Commission on New Americans
– Established

The MLLC supports HB961- State Government – Commission on New Americans – Established, 2024

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB961.

Maryland naturalized 19,797 new citizens in fiscal year 2021¹ and the American Immigration Council (AIC) estimates one in seven Marylanders was born in another country, with El Salvador topping the list of countries of origin.² Immigrant-led households in the state paid \$8 billion in federal taxes and \$4.1 billion in state and local taxes in 2018, and undocumented immigrants in Maryland paid an estimated \$373.5 million in federal taxes and \$242.3 million in state and local taxes in 2018, according to AIC.³

This legislation establishes a Commission on New Americans, which aims to study and report on the contributions of new Americans to the state. It focuses on enhancing the availability of government services for new Americans, which encompasses individuals who have recently become naturalized citizens or are residents of Maryland from countries other than the United States. The commission's activities include measuring the contributions of new Americans to the state and ensuring they have access to necessary government services, directly benefiting immigrant communities, including the Latino community, by recognizing their contributions and addressing their specific needs.

The commission would include one member from the Maryland Senate and one member from the House of Delegates, 15 members from the community appointed by the Governor, of which at least five appointed members shall be new Americans and at least four appointed members shall be second-generation Americans. The Commission would report on their findings on or before October 1, 2026, and at least every five years thereafter.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB961.

¹ [USA Facts.org, "Population And Society in the United States for Persons Naturalized \(Metrics\), Maryland \(State Of Residence\): Data and Trends." USAFacts, 2024.](https://www.usafacts.org/Reports/Population-And-Society-in-the-United-States-for-Persons-Naturalized-(Metrics)-Maryland-(State-Of-Residence)-Data-and-Trends)

² [American Immigration Council, "Immigrants in Maryland | American Immigration Council." American Immigration Council |, 6 August 2020. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-maryland](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-maryland)

³ Ibid