

S.56

An act relating to creating an Office of New Americans

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS STUDY COMMITTEE; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Office of New Americans Study Committee to make recommendations for creating an independent Office of New Americans.

(b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following members:

(1) the Director of the Vermont Refugee Office, who shall be Chair;

(2) one member, appointed by the Commissioner of Labor;

(3) one member, appointed by the Executive Director of the Office of Racial Equity; and

(4) six members, appointed by the Governor, one who must be a New American with lived experience, who shall include:

(A) one member, nominated by the Association of Africans Living in Vermont;

(B) one member, nominated by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants;

(C) one member, nominated by the Vermont Afghan Alliance;

(D) one member, nominated by the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation;

1 (E) one member, nominated by Migrant Justice; and

2 (F) one member, nominated by the Vermont State College System.

3 (c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall study and submit a written

4 report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development

5 and on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate

6 Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on

7 Government Operations concerning recommendations for creating an

8 independent Office of New Americans, including:

9 (1) a summary of the current demographic, economic, and public health

10 data regarding New Americans in the State and information regarding the

11 government services being utilized and underutilized by New Americans;

12 (2) a summary or survey of varying and successful approaches to

13 providing government services to New Americans in other states, with

14 particular focus on the topics of the role of education and training institutions,

15 professional licensing, housing, and support for employers and municipalities;

16 (3) in consultation with community-based organizations composed of or

17 serving New Americans, the Vermont Asylum Assistance Project, State

18 agencies and departments that provide services to New Americans, the

19 Secretary of State's Office, municipal government leaders, educational

20 institutions, and business leaders, information on:

1 (A) the existing State and local-level barriers for New Americans for
2 gainfully participating in the State’s workforce, economy, and business
3 communities;

4 (B) additional governmental services needed by New Americans but
5 not yet offered by the State; and

6 (C) the transfer or consolidation of existing governmental services
7 for New Americans that would be more efficiently provided by a new Office of
8 New Americans;

9 (4) the proposed structure, duties, funding, and labor needs of an Office
10 of New Americans; and

11 (5) a definition of the term “New Americans” for the purposes of an
12 Office of New Americans.

13 (d) The Committee may create subcommittees, with duties and leadership
14 to be assigned by the Chair.

15 (e) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative, technical,
16 and legal assistance of the Agency of Human Services.

17 (f) Date of Report. On or before September 1, 2026, the Committee shall
18 submit the written report required by subsection (c) of this section.

19 (g) Meetings.

20 (1) The Chair shall call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on
21 or before September 1, 2025.

1 (2) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

2 (3) The Committee shall cease to exist on the earlier of September 1,
3 2026 or the date that the Committee submits its written report.

4 (h) Compensation and reimbursement.

5 (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General
6 Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee serving in the member's
7 capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and
8 reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than 10
9 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the
10 General Assembly.

11 (2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem
12 compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A.
13 § 1010 for not more than 10 meetings. These payments shall be made from
14 monies appropriated to the Agency of Human Services.

15 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

16 This act shall take effect on passage.