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S.56

Introduced by Senators Gulick, Hardy, Harrison, Hashim, Vyhovsky, Weeks
and White

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Executive; Office of New Americans; report

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the
Office of New Americans Study Committee to study and report concerning the
creation of an independent Office of New Americans.

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 current member of the House of Representatives, who shall be
appointed by the Speaker of the House;

1 (3) one current member of the Senate, who shall be appointed by the

2 Committee on Committees;

3 (4) one member, appointed by the Secretary of Human Services;

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

5 (6) one member, appointed by the Executive Director of the Office of
6 Racial Equity;

7 (7) one member representing the Association of Africans Living in
8 Vermont; and

9 (8) seven members, appointed by the Governor, who shall include:

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

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

14 (C) one member, nominated by the Brattleboro Development Credit
15 Corporation;

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

17 (E) one member, nominated by World Education Services;

18 (F) one member, nominated by the Vermont Asylum Assistance
19 Project; and

20 (G) one member with experience or expertise serving nonnative
21 Vermonters on a statewide level.

1 (c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall study and submit a written
2 report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military
3 Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations concerning
4 recommendations for creating an independent Office of New Americans,
5 including:

6 (1) a summary of the current demographic, economic, and public health
7 data regarding New Americans in the State and information regarding the
8 government services being utilized and underutilized by New Americans;

9 (2) a summary or survey of varying and successful approaches to
10 providing government services to New Americans in other states, with
11 particular focus on the topics of the role of education and training institutions,
12 professional licensing, housing, and support for employers and municipalities;

13 (3) in consultation with community-based organizations composed of or
14 serving New Americans, State agencies and departments that provided services
15 to New Americans, municipal government leaders, educational institutions,
16 and business leaders, information on:

17 (A) the existing State and local-level barriers for New Americans for
18 gainfully participating in the State's workforce, economy, and business
19 communities;

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

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

4 (4) the structure of a to-be-created independent Office of New
5 Americans; and

6 (5) the proposed structure, duties, funding, and labor needs of an Office
7 of New Americans.

8 (d) The Committee shall be composed of the following three
9 subcommittees, with duties and leadership to be assigned by the Chair at the
10 first meeting of the Committee:

11 (1) Legal Services;

12 (2) Equity and Access to State Programs and Resources; and

13 (3) Workforce, Economic Opportunity, and Inclusion.

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

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

18 (g) Meetings.

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

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

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

3 (h) Compensation and reimbursement.

4 (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General
5 Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee serving in the member's
6 capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and
7 reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than 20
8 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the
9 General Assembly.

10 (2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem
11 compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A.
12 § 1010 for not more than 20 meetings. These payments shall be made from
13 monies appropriated to the Agency of Human Services.

14 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

15 This act shall take effect on passage.