

SB 703 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Judiciary

Action Date: 03/26/25

Action: Do pass and requesting referral to Ways and Means.

Vote: 4-2-0-0

Yeas: 4 - Broadman, Gelser Blouin, Manning Jr, Prozanski

Nays: 2 - McLane, Thatcher

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: Revenue impact issued

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Meeting Dates: 3/19, 3/26

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

This measure directs the Department of Human Services (DHS) to distribute grants to nonprofit service providers (nonprofits) to assist eligible noncitizens in paying for immigration legal services to change immigration status, and it authorizes DHS to make associated rules. This measure requires participating nonprofits to report their results to DHS and directs DHS to refer individuals to the nonprofits. This measure declares that it is Oregon state policy to assist eligible individuals in changing their immigration status, sets associated targets, and appropriates \$6 million from the General Fund.

Detailed Summary:

Grant Program

- Defines “noncitizen” as an individual who is 1) a recipient of or eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), or 2) an individual from Iraq or Afghanistan provided with special immigrant status by the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security.
- Directs DHS to provide grants to nonprofits to assist eligible noncitizens in changing their immigration status or obtaining lawful permanent resident status.
- Mandates nonprofits allocate all funds received as grants towards legal costs or USCIS fees with noncitizens’ eligibility for grants based on adjusted gross income criteria.
- Requires nonprofits to provide information about federal public assistance programs to noncitizens who succeed in changing their immigration status.
- Directs nonprofits to report to DHS on the number of individuals assisted and the results.
- Declares it is Oregon policy to assist eligible individuals to change their immigration status.
- Sets biennial targets as to eligible individuals achieving a change in immigration status.
- Instructs DHS to refer noncitizens to nonprofits, prioritizing referral of those potentially eligible for federal public assistance programs.
- Limits the information DHS may collect from noncitizens.
- Authorizes DHS to make rules to carry out the provisions of the measure.

Appropriation

- Appropriates \$6 million from the General Fund for the grant program in the coming biennium.
- Establishes that DHS need not change its online eligibility system to refer noncitizens to nonprofits if the costs of such online change exceed \$100,000 for the coming biennium.

Effective Date

- Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Legal complexities of applying for citizenship or permanent legal status

This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.

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- Immigrants' role in Oregon's economy
- Decreasing federal funding
- State funding priorities
- Constitutional duty to balance Oregon's budget

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

USCIS, within the Department of Homeland Security, is the federal agency that processes applications for citizenship and immigration statuses. Examples of immigration statuses include refugee, asylum, temporary protected status, DACA, humanitarian parole, special immigrant visa, and lawful permanent resident (also called "green card"). Individuals who wish to change their immigration status or apply for a green card must follow a USCIS process and pay related legal and administrative fees. Those who lack federal documentation of their immigration status are at risk of civil penalties and deportation.

The Legislative Assembly considered House Bill 2957 A in 2023, and House Bill 4085 A in 2024, each of which would have established grant programs to help eligible individuals cover the costs of immigration legal services. Both bills remained in Joint Ways and Means upon adjournment.