

SB 703 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Judiciary

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Meeting Dates: 3/19

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 authorizes DHS to make associated rules. This measure requires participating nonprofits to report their results to DHS and directs DHS to refer individuals it serves 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 \$6,000,000 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 change their immigration status or obtain 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 such a change.
- 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 \$6,000,000 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:

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

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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.