



Commonwealth of Virginia

Office of Governor Glenn A. Youngkin



***New Americans are valuable contributors to the Commonwealth
and are worth competing for.***

Annual Report 2022-2023

October 12th, 2023

To: Glenn A. Youngkin, Governor
Honorable General Assembly Members

From: Kate Ayers, Chair
Office of New Americans Advisory Board

Kate M. Ayers



VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF
NEW AMERICANS
ADVISORY
BOARD

The Office of New Americans Advisory Board (the Board) was created in 2020 under §2.2-2496 and established as an advisory board, within the meaning of § 2.2-2100, in the executive branch of state government. The purpose of the Board is to advise the Governor, cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to improve state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

As part of this duty, the Chair of the Board is required to report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the activities of the Office of New Americans Advisory Board and provide recommendations for improving state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

New American communities are essential to the economic success of the United States. A 2023 report from the American Immigration Council found that 44.8% of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children. The report goes on to state that:

“These New American Fortune 500 companies collectively generated a staggering \$8.1 trillion in revenue during fiscal year 2022, surpassing the GDP of several developed nations. Their significant contributions extend beyond revenue, as they employ over 14.8 million people, emphasizing their role as a crucial driver of job creation and economic prosperity¹.”

There is no doubt that New American communities are valuable assets to the Commonwealth. We are competing with other states to realize the full economic and social potential of New Americans. As new corporate investments and business activity in the Commonwealth grows, the opportunities to leverage the growing New American population are plentiful. It is imperative that we better engage the New American population in the Commonwealth to address these labor and economic opportunities.

Virginia must create policies and build systems that allow for the economic integration of New American Communities. ***New Americans are valuable contributors to the Commonwealth and are worth competing for.***

Additionally, global events continue to remind us that Virginia is an international destination, refuge, and place for new beginnings. Not only has the Commonwealth provided refuge and succor for Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, but it has also attracted worldwide talent to its schools and leading companies.

Investments in talent acquisition and retention should be at the forefront of our immigrant integration initiatives. These investments will produce returns in workforce development, economic opportunity and potentially business

¹ American Immigration Council, [New Report Reveals Immigrant Roots of Fortune 500 Companies](#)
2022-2023 Office of New Americans Advisory Board Report - October 2023

attraction and even more foreign investment in the Commonwealth or opening pathways to new markets overseas.

The Commonwealth has an opportunity to embrace these communities as we recognize that these New Americans will enhance our workforce, create jobs, and provide a more competitive edge in the global marketplace.

We have identified several recommendations that we feel will help strengthen immigrant integration in the Commonwealth, economically empower New Americans and their surrounding communities, and support a robust Office of New Americans. We look forward to engaging further to establish more comprehensive connections to these communities, develop effective support that is accessible and aligns the localities, state and Federal resources to create a more Welcoming Commonwealth - ***A Commonwealth in which new and aspiring New Americans are recognized as valued contributors of the Commonwealth and are worth competing for.***

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of New Americans Advisory Board (as created in 2020 under §2.2-2496 and established as an advisory board, within the meaning of § 2.2-2100, in the executive branch of state government. The purpose of the Board is to advise the Governor, cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to improve state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

The ONAAB is pleased to submit the third annual board report to the Honorable Glenn A. Youngkin and the Virginia General Assembly. Pursuant to §2.2-2498 of the Code of Virginia, this report serves as a summary of its activities, findings, and recommendations.

The ONAAB defines “New Americans” as: *New Americans refer to foreign-born persons residing in Virginia and their children, foreign and native born.* The foreign-born population in the Commonwealth is estimated to be 1.1 million individuals or roughly 12.7% of the total state population.² This fast-growing segment of Virginia’s overall population ranks as the 11th largest immigrant population in the nation.³

Two-thirds of all immigrants live in Northern Virginia, but sizable immigrant communities exist in Richmond, Roanoke, and other metropolitan areas throughout the Commonwealth. In fact, certain census tracts in Accomack, Rockingham and Lunenburg Counties have immigrant densities like many parts of Northern Virginia.

Additionally, Virginia is one of the top three recipients of Afghan refugees resettling in the United States. Virginia’s Office of New Americans have provided resettlement services to 9,565 Afghans as of August 22nd, 2022.

ONAAB has adopted the following **Guiding Principles** that provide an overarching focus regarding the work of the board.

- **Recognizing our Value**
- **Ensuring Linguistic and Cultural Competencies**
- **Data Integrity**
- **Championing Representation**

The Board maintains a **committee structure** that is flexible but allows for deeper analysis of the far-ranging and multifaceted issues that New American communities face in Virginia.

- **Access to Services Committee** - This committee will focus on building awareness of the specific barriers that newcomers face in accessing services and resources.
- **Economic Opportunity Committee** - This Committee will explore the economic landscape and review what supports are provided by the Commonwealth for workforce development and entrepreneurs.
- **Inter / Intra Governmental Affairs Committee** - This Committee will explore the interconnectivity of governmental policy and changes to those policies that impact New American communities in the Commonwealth.

The Board also has dedicated **Language Access** and **Data Integrity** leads in line with our Guiding Principles.

In the last year, ONAAB members listened to key stakeholders, learned how to engage with legislators and communicate with state agencies, and collaborated with other advisory boards. ONAAB leadership surveyed key stakeholders across the state to identify unmet needs. We worked with the Virginia Latino Advisory Board (VLAB)

² [U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2022, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Table S0501](#)

³ Ibid.

and Virginia Asian Advisory Board (VAAB) to write a letter to the Governor about the importance of developing a statewide language access plan. To highlight the economic opportunities within New American populations, we have formed a committee with leaders from VLAB and VAAB to plan an international business symposium for spring of 2024. This work helped us form the following summary of recommendations.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCESS TO SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

Healthcare

Ensure that New Americans can access, understand, and use health related information AND that healthcare professionals understand how to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate health information.

- Perform health literacy assessments of New American communities.
 - Based on the results, determine best practices for ensuring New Americans have access to information they need to make good health decisions
- Perform cultural and linguistic competency assessments of healthcare providers.
 - Based on the results, determine if Implicit Bias and Cultural Humility Continuing Medical Education should be a requirement for Virginia medical providers
 - Ensure that all Medicaid eligible Virginians have access to dental health services.
- Create pathways and opportunities for more dental providers to be educated and offer services to Medicaid patients.
- Emphasize a diverse dental health workforce that reflects Virginia’s population.
- Increase Medicaid reimbursement rates so that more Virginia dentists will accept Medicaid insured patients.

Education

Improve access to English language learning for refugees and immigrants in Virginia.

- Provide specific avenues for local literacy programs to gain access and utilize federal and state funding.
- Encourage public/private partnerships that could fund English classes and address barriers. For example, large employers of New Americans could partner with a literacy agency to provide onsite English for their employees.
- Dedicate one of the new Virginia Department of Education Lab schools⁴ to English Language Learning.
- Facilitate transition from ESOL programs to institutes of higher education by investing in Bridge Programs that address the English proficiency and college readiness needs of New Americans.
- Provide accessible information about associate and trade-based programs with a direct tie to the labor market and ensure high-demand courses are made known and open to diverse groups.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Workforce Development

- Through Budgetary action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans and the Department of Labor to study employment and educational history of New Americans to determine focus of career pathway programs, and New American capacity to fill employment gaps in the state.
- Through Budgetary action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans, the Department of Labor, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, and the Department of Education to explore further opportunities to recruit New American talent and retain them through statewide employment initiatives.

⁴ Virginia Department of Education, [Laboratory Schools Frequently Asked Questions](#)

- Through Budgetary action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans and the Department of Labor to review licensing and certification criteria and develop, translate, and disseminate career pathway maps.

INTER/INTRA GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS RECOMMENDATIONS

U.S. Citizenship Recommendations

- ONA should highlight the existing U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) Citizenship Resource Material on the ONA website and in any other related state agency websites or materials.
- ONA should explore working directly with the USCIS Office of Citizenship and Applicant Information Services to use their resources, and/or develop other resources specific to Virginia, to promote naturalization at community events, meetings, etc.
- Through Budgetary Action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans to develop programs that will promote naturalization, highlight, and utilize existing USCIS Office of Citizenship Resources and Application Services, and provide technical support to those applying for citizenship.

Language Access Recommendations

- The Office of New American Advisory Board recommends that the Virginia Governor empower the Office of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion to create and provide oversight of a statewide language access plan, in partnership with the Office of New Americans and the Office of New Americans Advisory Board, that would provide guidance and expectations for agency and department language access plans throughout the government of Virginia. The state language access plan would also include procurement policies and the review of the Code for provisions that would limit or restrain the implementation of a state language access plan. This would then be accompanied by legislative action for compliance provisions.
- The Office of New American Advisory Board recommends that adequate funding be provided to fully staff the Office of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion to oversee the compliance of agencies and departments within the state language access plan. The ODOI would also be tasked with the periodic review of state language access plan for compliance with federal guidelines and current best practices.

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

- Amend the Code to allow for more meetings per year.
- Amend the Code to raise the number of appointed non-legislative citizen Board members to twenty-one.
- Amend the Code to include additional ex-officio members on the Board.
- Amend the Code governing Freedom of Information Act to allow for electronic meetings for subcommittee work of advisory boards as defined by Code §2.2-2100.

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICAN ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

- Commission a new JLARC study to assess the integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth and update the findings from the 2004 report.
- Enhance the Office of New Americans budget to address expanded and unmet needs.

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2022-2023 OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS ADVISORY BOARD

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Kate Ayers, Chair - *Henrico*

Susannah Lepley, Vice-Chair, *Harrisonburg*

Ahoo Salem, Secretary, *Roanoke*

Michael Hoefler, Treasurer, *Alexandria*

COMMITTEE & FOCUS LEADERSHIP

Dr. Ahoo Salem, Co-Lead, Ensuring Linguistic and Cultural Competencies Focus – *Roanoke*

Dr. Eva Stitt, Co-Lead, Ensuring Linguistic and Cultural Competencies Focus – *Norfolk*

Michael Hoefler, Lead, Data Integrity Focus – *Alexandria*

CURRENT MEMBERS

Hassan Ahmad, Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs Committee – *Sterling*

James Gordon, Access to Services Committee – *Halifax*

Dr. Fern Hauck, Access to Services Committee – *Earlysville*

Susannah Lepley, Economic Opportunity Committee – *Rockingham*

Eric Lin, Inter/Intra governmental Affairs Committee- *Richmond*

Andrei Lipan, Access to Services Committee - *Chesterfield*

Bo Machayo, Economic Opportunity Committee – *Leesburg*

Dora Muhammad, Access to Services Committee – *Triangle*

Krishendeo Ramsingh, Economic Opportunity Committee - *Roanoke*

Juan Santacoloma, Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs Committee – *Chesterfield*

Eric-Michel Sossou-Gloh, Economic Opportunity Committee - *Alexandria*

Dr. Milton Vickerman, Data Equity Focus and Economic Opportunity Committee – *Charlottesville*

FORMER MEMBERS

Amar Bhattarai- *Roanoke*

Rammy Barbari – *Falls Church*

Hannah “Mel” Borja - *Richmond*

Amelia Castaneda-Smith – *Richmond*

Dr. Jennifer Crewalk – *Reston*

El Hadji Djibril Niang – *Richmond*

SoYoung Yoon – *Manassas Park*

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Martin D. Brown, Chief Diversity Officer, Office of Diversity, Opportunity, & Inclusion

Nina Ha, Chair, Virginia Asian Advisory Board

Dr. Cheryl Ivey Green, Chair, Virginia African American Advisory Board

Micheal Perez, Deputy Chief Diversity Officer, Office of Diversity, Opportunity, & Inclusion

Ashley Reynolds, Chair, Council on Women

Lyons Sanchezcocha, Chair, Virginia Latino Advisory Board

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

The Office of New Americans was created under §63.2-209.1 in 2020 as an office within the Department of Social Services. The Office of New Americans incorporated the existing Office of Newcomer Services into a new office specifically to assist immigrant integration within the Commonwealth on an economic, social, and cultural level.

Under the authorizing code, the Office shall:

- 1. Implement a statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth.*
- 2. Work with localities to coordinate and support local efforts that align with the statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth;*
- 3. Provide advice and assistance to New Americans regarding (i) the citizenship application process and (ii) securing employment, housing, and services for which such persons may be eligible;*
- 4. Provide advice and assistance to state agencies regarding (i) the coordination of relevant policies across state agencies responsible for education, workforce, and training programs, including professional licensure guidance, small business development, worker protection, refugee resettlement, citizenship and voter education or engagement programs, housing programs, and other related programs, and (ii) the dissemination of information to localities and immigration service organizations regarding state programs that help New Americans find and secure employment, housing, and services for which they may be eligible;*
- 5. Educate localities and immigration service organizations on health epidemics and unlawful predatory actions, such as human trafficking, gang recruitment, and fraudulent financial and other schemes, to which communities of such persons may be especially vulnerable;*
- 6. Serve as the primary liaison with external stakeholders, particularly immigrant-serving and refugee serving organizations and businesses, on immigrant integration priorities and policies.*
- 7. Partner with state agencies and immigrant-serving and refugee-serving organizations and businesses to identify and disseminate beneficial immigrant integration policies and practices throughout the Commonwealth;*
- 8. Manage competitive grant programs that replicate beneficial practices or test new innovations that improve the effectiveness and efficacy of immigrant integration strategies; and*
- 9. Advise the Governor, cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to improve state programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth.*

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS ADVISORY BOARD

The Office of New Americans Advisory Board (the Board) was created in 2020 under §2.2-2496 and established as an advisory board, within the meaning of § 2.2-2100, in the executive branch of state government. The purpose of the Board is to advise the Governor, cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to improve state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

Under the authorizing code, the Board shall have the following powers and duties:

- *Advise the Governor on ways to improve state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth;*
- *Undertake studies, symposiums, research, and factual reports to gather information to formulate and present recommendations to the Governor related to issues of concern and importance to New Americans in the Commonwealth;*
- *Advise the Governor as needed regarding any statutory, regulatory, or other issues of importance to New Americans in the Commonwealth;*
- *Collaborate with the Department of Social Services and other public and private entities to recognize and call attention to the significant contributions of New Americans in the Commonwealth; and*
- *Report annually by December 1 to the Governor and the General Assembly on the activities of the Office of New Americans and provide recommendations for improving state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth. The chairman of the Board shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual executive summary of the interim activity and work of the Board no later than the first day of each regular session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall be submitted as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted to the General Assembly's website.*

The inaugural Board was appointed on October 16, 2020 and consists of sixteen non-legislative citizen members appointed by the Governor who represent or have experience with the faith community; local government; the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service; law-enforcement agencies; health, mental health, housing and workforce development organizations; organizations serving youth and the elderly; organizations providing legal services for immigrants; and educational institutions and institutions of higher education. In addition, the Director of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion for the Commonwealth and the Chairpersons of the Virginia Asian Advisory Board, the Latino Advisory Board, the Virginia African American Advisory Board, and the Council on Women, or their designees, shall serve ex officio with non-voting privileges. Non-legislative citizen members of the Board shall be residents of the Commonwealth.

The Board has adopted the following Guiding Principles that help provide the overarching focus with regard to the work of the Board. These Guiding principles include:

Recognizing our Value - The Board believes that investment in New Americans communities is an investment in individuals who bring significant value to the Commonwealth. This core tenet is critical to working towards a welcoming and inclusive Commonwealth.

Ensuring Linguistic and Cultural Competencies - Linguistic and cultural barriers impact practically every aspect of the New American experience. Issues and access points must be evaluated with these barriers in mind. The Board expects to be very intentional about this area of focus and recognizes that it transcends issues and areas of responsibility in the state government.

Data Integrity - It is impossible to address issues and disparities without data to identify issues, understand disparities, and advocate for policy change. Data collection and accessibility must be modernized to accurately reflect today's Commonwealth and its makeup of race, ethnicity, national origin, and other identifiers. Every effort should be made to make data publicly available.

Championing Representation - The Board seeks to raise up New American communities so that they are able to represent themselves while advancing their community's integration and acculturation into the native-born communities. The principle calls for a specific focus on recognizing our diversity and intentionally working for inclusion.



Based on the Board's recognition that the issues impacting the New American communities are far-ranging and multifaceted, the Board has adopted a committee structure that will be flexible but allow for the deeper dives into the issues confronting these communities.

The Board shall conduct its work through the following **COMMITTEES**:

Access to Services Committee – This committee will focus on building awareness of the specific barriers that newcomers face in accessing services and resources. Additionally, the committee will review potential solutions and best practices that will address these barriers and improve equitable access.

This Committee will explore New American's access to services by:

- Building awareness in newcomer communities of available services and resources,
- Understanding the specific barriers that newcomers face in accessing these services and resources,
- Recommending strategies and processes to break down the barriers that keep newcomers from utilizing services and resources, and
- Exploring opportunities to provide basic services to all newcomer communities, despite immigration status (healthcare, food access, etc...).

This year's Access to Services Committee members include:

- Dr. Fern Hauck, Committee Lead
- Kate Ayers
- James Gordon
- Andrei Lipan
- Dora Muhammad

Economic Opportunity Committee – This Committee will explore the economic landscape and review supports provided by the Commonwealth for workforce development and entrepreneurs. Most importantly, this committee will assess where barriers exist and provide recommendations to address these barriers. Additionally, this Committee will highlight potential economic development opportunities through foreign-born New Americans and their connectivity to their home countries.

This Committee will delve deeper into this work by:

- Assessing the economic impact of New Americans in the Commonwealth,

- Reviewing workforce development resources and employment opportunities,
- Reviewing self-employment and business supports, and
- Exploring cultural and linguistic barriers and how they affect the integration of New Americans into the economy.

This year's Economic Opportunity Committee members include:

- Eric-Michel Sossou-Gloh, Chair
- Ramsingh Krishendeo
- Susannah Lepley
- Bo Machayo
- Dr. Milton Vickerman

Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs Committee - This Committee will explore the interconnectivity of governmental policy and changes to those policies that impact New Americans and their communities in the Commonwealth. The Committee seeks to provide holistic support to New Americans in the Commonwealth by:

- Identifying key governmental issues impacting their communities such as assistance and advocacy for naturalization.
- Providing program, policy, and regulation recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly.
- Monitoring federal, state, and local legislative issues and determining their impacts, and
- Identifying grant opportunities to support necessary programs and initiatives.

This year's Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs Committee members include:

- Eric Lin, Chair
- Hassan Ahmad
- Michael Hoefler
- Juan Santacoloma

The Board also has two dedicated **Language Access** leads in line with our Guiding Principle of **Ensuring Linguistic and Cultural Competence**. These leads seek to review language access plans and cultural competencies of the various state and local agencies that engage with the New American communities, throughout the Commonwealth. Additionally, the leads will support state efforts to create and implement a state language access plan that will create linguistic and culturally appropriate pathways for more effective immigrant integration into the Commonwealth.

This year's Language Access Co-Leads are:

- Dr. Ahoo Salem
- Dr. Eva Stitt

The Board also has a dedicated **Data Integrity** lead in line with our Guiding Principles of **Data Integrity**. This lead seeks to support New Americans and all Virginia residents by publicizing and encouraging the collection of relevant data on the economic and demographic characteristics of VA immigrants. This information will be made easily accessible to all and will help inform the recommendations of the Board as it seeks to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

- Michael Hoefler
- Dr. Milton Vickerman

DATA ON NEW AMERICANS IN THE COMMONWEALTH

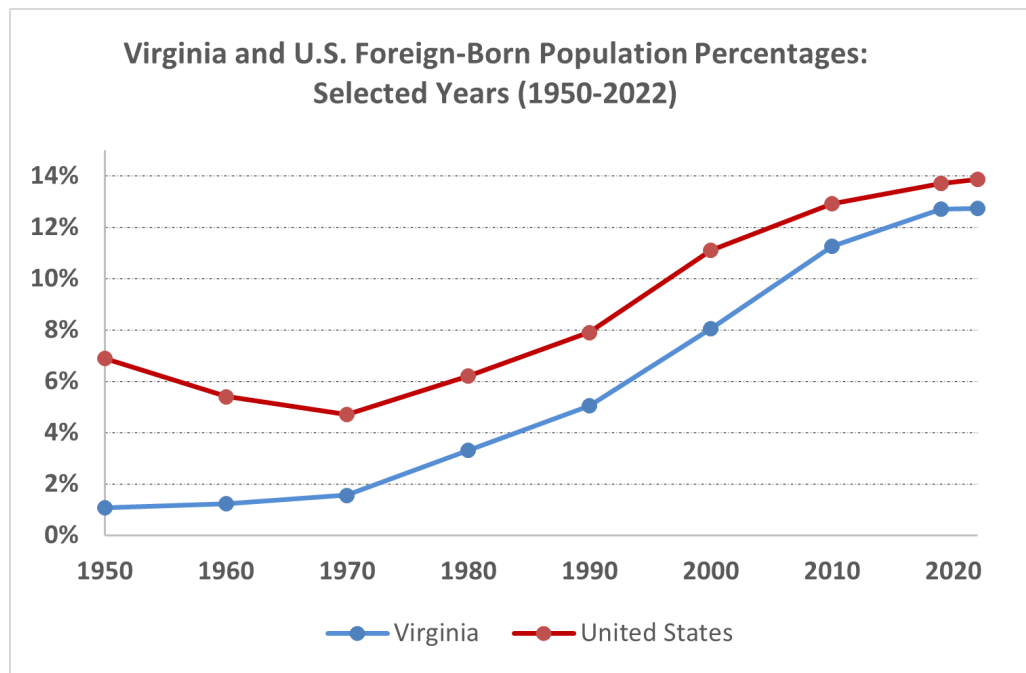
Our Board provided a comprehensive overview of Virginia’s New American population in the 2020-2021 Annual Report titled **New Americans in the Commonwealth: Changing Demographics**. We have updated the main demographic data from that report in this section and provided pertinent data from **Barriers to Integration of Virginia’s Immigrants: Challenges and Opportunities Identified through a Needs Assessment**, which was published and summarized in our 2021-22 report.

NEW AMERICAN DATA REVIEW: 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Population Change

Virginia’s total population more than doubled between 1960 (4.0 million) and 2022 (8.7 million), while the number of foreign-born persons in Virginia increased twenty-three times over the same period. As in other states, Virginia’s population grew and became more diverse in part due to the elimination of national restrictions on immigration in 1965 by the Immigration and Nationality Act. The Act eliminated restrictions on immigration that had favored northern and western European immigration to the United States. Pursuant to the 1965 reforms, Virginia’s foreign-born population grew from 72,000 in 1960 to 312,000 in 1990. It continued to increase to 1.11 million in 2022, the latest data available.⁵

Figure 1.



*Sources: Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 2000, Working Paper Number **POP-WP081**; The Foreign-Born Population in the U.S., U.S. Census Bureau, May 2012; Virginia State Data Profile, 2019 1-year ACS compiled by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2022, Subject Table S0501.*

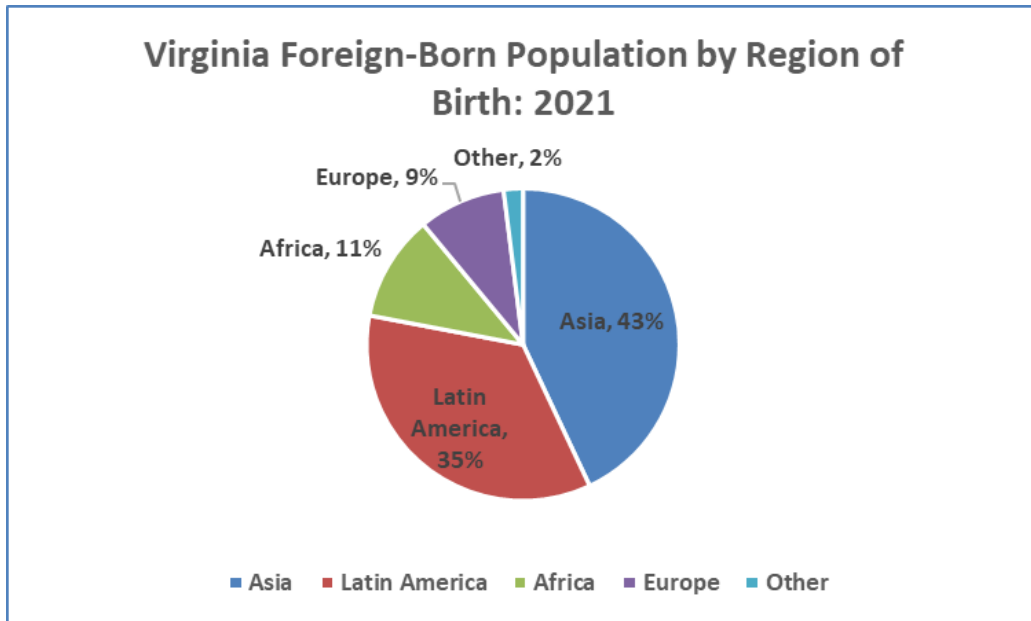
Overall, Virginia’s foreign-born population increased from 1.2% of total residents to 12.7% between 1960 and 2022 (see figure 1). Virginia was the 25th highest state in numbers of foreign-born persons in 1960 but has increased more rapidly than other states. It has the 11th largest foreign-born population as of 2022. By

⁵ [U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2022, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Table S0501.](#)

comparison, the percent foreign-born in the United States increased from 5.4 percent in 1960 to 13.9 percent in 2022.

In 2021 most of Virginia’s foreign-born residents originated in Asia (43 percent) and from Latin America (South American, Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean) (35 percent) (see figure 2). Eleven percent were born in Africa and 9 percent in Europe.

Figure 2.



Source: [Migration Policy Institute, Virginia State Data Profile, 2021 1-year American Community Survey](#)

More than 43 percent of Virginia’s recent immigrants with legal status, specifically lawful permanent residents (otherwise known as “green card holders”) in Fiscal Years 2017-21 were born in eight countries. The leading countries were: India (8.7%), El Salvador (8.3), and Afghanistan (7.5), followed by Vietnam (3.9), China (3.9), Pakistan (3.8), the Philippines (3.6), Ethiopia (3.6), Nepal (3.0), and Mexico (2.9). Seven of the top ten source countries are in Asia.⁶

Labor Force and Economics

New Americans are integral to Virginia’s economic growth. They are a growing share of Virginia’s workforce, in part because immigration is at historically high levels, but also due to a slowdown in the supply of U.S.-born workers following years of declining birth rates. The National Academy of Sciences finds that “The vast majority of current and future net workforce growth—which, at less than 1 percent annually, is very slow by historical standards—will be accounted for by immigrants and their U.S.-born descendants.”⁷

Indeed, the percentage of employed civilians in Virginia who were foreign born rose from 9.8 percent in 2000 to 16.7 percent in 2022, and it will continue to grow into the future (See Figure 3). About 44 percent of the growth in the VA workforce between 2000 and 2022 was due to immigration. We previously estimated that 21 percent

⁶ [Office of Immigration Statistics, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Lawful Permanent Residents Supplementary Data Tables, Table 1d, various years.](#)

⁷ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2017. *The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Immigration*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/23550>, page 4.

of Virginia residents under 18 years old (the next generation of workers) were immigrants or children of immigrants.⁸ We believe it is our duty to invest in these children through education, and to remove any cultural or language barriers so that they can reach their full potential.

Figure 3.
Virginia Civilian Labor Force, Foreign and Total Population: 2000 and 2022

Civilian labor force (age 16 and older)	2022			2000		
	Foreign Born	Total	% Foreign Born	Foreign Born	Total	% Foreign Born
Population	1,048,493	7,041,278	14.9%	523,188	5,532,460	9.5%
Civilian labor force	743,382	4,454,419	16.7%	346,595	3,562,712	9.7%
% in the civilian labor force	70.9%	63.3%		66.2%	64.4%	
Civilian Employed Workers	718,218	4,295,180	16.7%	332,866	3,410,706	9.8%

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2022, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Table S0501](#) and 2000 Census.

New immigrants are particularly important additions to the workforce during periods of tight labor markets such as we have experienced the past several years. The unemployment rate in Virginia was only 2.5 percent in July 2023, compared to the national rate of 3.5 percent. Virginia had the tenth lowest unemployment rate among the various states and the District of Columbia. The most recently available unemployment data for Virginia by national origin show that the foreign-born rate was 3.4 percent in 2022, slightly lower than the 3.7 percent rate of U.S.-born VA residents.⁹

The successful integration of immigrants and their children into the workforce also builds Virginia’s economy and contributes to State and Local resources through tax collections. The American Immigration Council estimates that immigrant households in Virginia in 2019 had \$47.1 billion in income, paid \$4.1 billion in state and local income taxes, and paid \$9.4 billion in federal taxes.¹⁰ The median household income of foreign-born households in Virginia was \$101,700 in 2022, compared to \$83,750 for U.S.-born households.¹¹ This difference is partly due to family size differences as median individual incomes for foreign-born full-time workers are comparable to the is slightly higher than native born: \$68,100 for foreign-born males vs. \$70,900 for native-born males, \$57,500 for foreign-born females vs. \$56,400 for foreign-born females.¹²

Despite the higher median incomes, immigrant households had a poverty rate of 9.0 percent, higher than the U.S.-born rate of 7.0 percent.¹³ Naturalized citizens had a poverty rate of 6.5 percent compared to 14.4 percent for non-citizens. Note that non-citizens likely include persons in VA without authorization who tend to have high labor force participation rates but lower earnings.

New Americans also contribute to job growth due to their high rate of entrepreneurship. The American Immigration Council estimates that there are 80,700 immigrant entrepreneurs in Virginia as of 2019 with a total

⁸ 2021-2022 Office of New Americans Advisory Board Report, October 2022, Table 17.

⁹ [U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2022, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Table S0501](#).

¹⁰ [American Immigration Council, State Fact Sheet, Immigrants in Virginia, Taxes and Spending Power](#)

¹¹ [U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2022, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Table S0501](#)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

business income of \$2.5 billion. While immigrants are 16.1 percent of the total civilian workforce, they account for 22.8 percent of Virginia’s entrepreneurs.¹⁴

Immigrant workers are concentrated in occupations at both the low- and high-skill levels. Immigrants tend to be more concentrated in “service occupations” and “natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations” than the native born (See Figure 4).

Figure 4.
Major Occupations of the Virginia Civilian Labor Force, Foreign and U.S. born: 2022

Occupations	Foreign Born	U.S. Born
Civilian Workers Age 16 and Older	718,218	3,576,962
% Civilian Workers Employed in		
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	48.0%	49.3%
Service occupations	17.5%	14.5%
Sales and office occupations	14.4%	19.2%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	9.9%	6.8%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	10.3%	10.1%

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2022, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Table S0501.](#)

The American Immigration Council has reported more specific occupation data showing niche occupations and industry concentrations. Immigrant workers were most concentrated in the following industries in 2018: Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services 102,994; Health Care and Social Assistance 91,279; Construction 89,538; Retail Trade 75,180; and Accommodation and Food Services 74,057. The top 5 industries with the highest share of foreign-born workers were taxi and limousine services (58.4%), nail salons and other personal care (56.8%), private households (48.7%), services to buildings and dwellings (39.4%), and traveler accommodation (35.5%).

Specific professional fields in Virginia have a robust foreign-born workforce as well. Immigrants comprise 22.8% of STEM workers in Virginia. Virginia’s healthcare industries by share of foreign-born workers were: physicians and surgeons (29.4%), health aides (18.7%), and nurses (14.0%).

Virginia’s New Americans bring skills and experiences that have contributed to 43 percent of the growth in our workforce over the past 2 decades. They have higher labor force participation rates and slightly higher median incomes than native born residents. New Americans also have high rates of entrepreneurship and are essential workers in, for example, the healthcare and construction sectors. We need to continue to support them as they will account for an even greater share of the labor force in the coming decades, not only to benefit them, but also for the continued economic growth of Virginia. We support them by providing culturally and linguistically accessible healthcare services, supporting their education and English language learning, and streamlining career pathways.

¹⁴ [American Immigration Council, State Fact Sheet, Immigrants in Virginia, Entrepreneurship.](#)

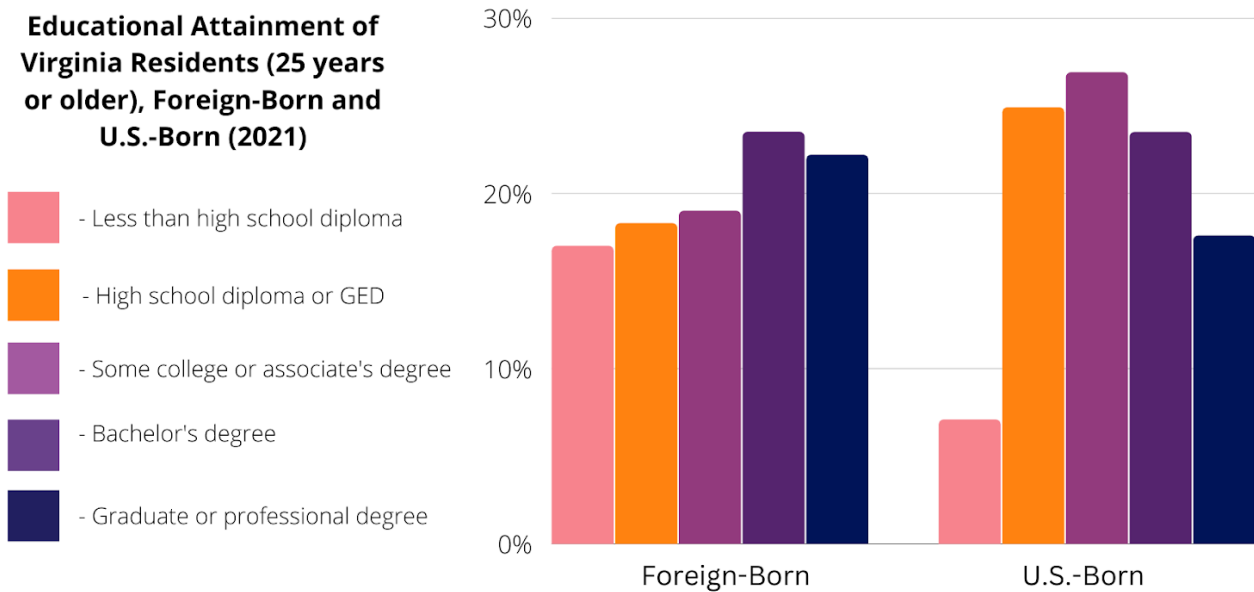
Language Proficiency

More than 38 percent of Virginia’s foreign-born residents in 2021 were Limited English Proficient (LEP). More than 17 percent report only speaking English at home and nearly 45 percent state that they speak English “very well.” Half of non-citizens are LEP, while 29 percent of naturalized citizens report that they are LEP.

Education

Immigrants in Virginia as of 2021 exhibit a bimodal educational pattern, with 46 percent holding a college degree but 17 percent failed to finish high school (see figure 5). About 41 percent of Virginia’s native-born population has a college degree, while only 7 percent lack at least a high school degree.

Figure 5.



Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2021, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Table S0501](#)

While 46 percent of Virginia’s foreign-born residents have a college degree, the Migration Policy Institute reports that 18 percent of these graduates are underutilized, i.e., they are unemployed or employed in low-skilled jobs.

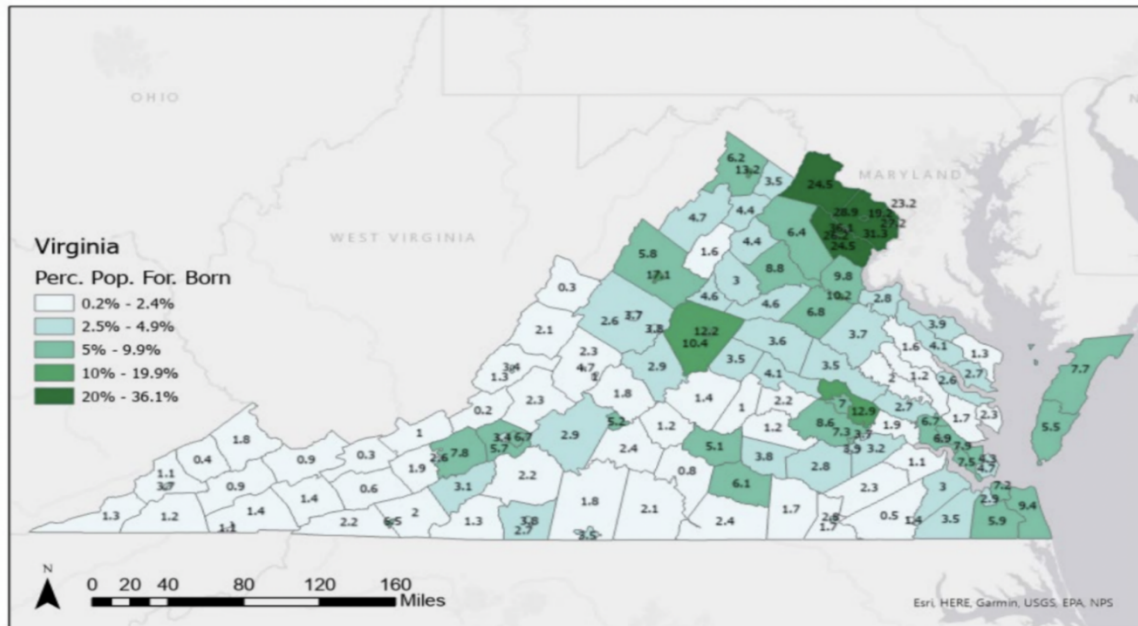
Immigrant Population Distribution at the Local Level

Two-thirds of all immigrants live in Northern Virginia as of 2019, but sizable immigrant communities exist in Richmond, Roanoke and other metropolitan areas throughout the commonwealth. In fact, certain census tracts in Accomack, Rockingham and Lunenburg Counties have immigrant densities similar to many parts of Northern Virginia.

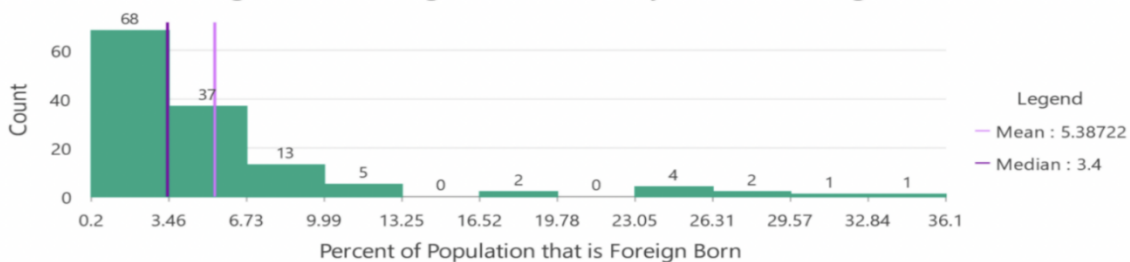
As can be seen from the histogram below, the immigrant population exceeds 10% of the population in only fifteen of 133 localities, while sixty-eight localities have an immigrant community that represents less than 3.5% of the population. Manassas Park City (36.1%) and Fairfax (31.3%) are the only localities where more than 3 in 10 residents are an immigrant. Craig County is at the other end of the spectrum – only 0.2% of its population is foreign-born.

Smaller cities, such as Harrisonburg (17.1%), Winchester (13.2%) and Charlottesville (12.2%), alongside Henrico County (12.9%), represent the localities with the greatest concentrations of immigrants outside of Northern Virginia. Importantly, not all localities where immigrants make up more than 5% of the population are cities. The Eastern Shore as well as Prince Edward and Lunenburg Counties represent non-urban contexts that still contain significant immigrant populations.

Figure 6.



Histogram - 133 Virginia Localities by Percent Foreign Born



Source: *Barriers to Integration of Virginia’s Immigrants: Challenges and Opportunities Identified through a Needs Assessment (2022)*

BOARD ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH 2022-2023

GENERAL BOARD MEETINGS

The Board was created through legislation passed in the 2020 General Assembly session and the inaugural board was appointed on October 16, 2020. Since the last submission of our report the Board held the following general meetings:

- January 4, 2023 – Richmond
- April 12, 2023 – Richmond
- July 12, 2023 – Virtual Meeting
- October 4, 2022 – Richmond

The following guest speakers at our meetings provided substantive guidance and information that has contributed to the work of the Board and this report.

- Mireya Reith, Director Arkansas United
- Dr. Danny Avula – Commissioner, Department of Social Services
- Seyoum Berhe, Director, Virginia Office of New Americans
- Freddy Mejia – MSW, Deputy Director of Policy, The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis
- Lyons Sanchezconcha – Chair, Virginia Latino Advisory Board
- Ellen Meinhart, Virginia Economic Development Partnership
- Nuha Muntasser, CWS, Advocacy Team

BOARD MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Additionally, the members of the Board have engaged in their appointed capacity in the following manner:

- Participation in statewide Virginia Community Capacity Initiative Meetings (VCCI) in Roanoke, Harrisonburg, Charlottesville, Richmond, and Tidewater, 2022 and 2023
- Participation in Roanoke Language Access Conference, 2023
- Participation in Goodwin House Citizenship Program Briefing, 2023
- VA Latino Advisory Board Meeting, 2023
- Participation in Henrico County Multicultural and Faith Leader meetings 2022-2023
- Participation in Richmond’s Newcomer Dialogue Meetings, 2022-2023
- Participation in the Tuckahoe YMCA Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, 2022-2023
- Participation in Richmond’s Multicultural Festival: Imagine 2022, 2023
- Participation in The Commonwealth Institute’s Annual Policy Summit, 2022
- Participation in introduction meeting with Martin Brown and Michel Perez, Office of Diversity, Equality, and Opportunity, 2022
- Participation in an introduction meeting with Dr. Danny Avula, Director of DSS, 2023
- Participation in Welcoming America Welcoming Economies Challenge 2023

OUTREACH

Board members also attended or engaged with the following organizations and their representatives in conducting the work of the Board and creation of this report.

- Dr. Sultana Salam - Afghan Community leader
- Anna Lobkov- Ukrainian Community Leader
- Dr. Nana Derby- President of the African Community Network
- Katy Lampan, Director Tuckahoe YMCA

- Ghazala Hashmi – Senator, General Assembly – District 10
- Kendra Hudson - Immigration Policy Specialist, Virginia Office of New Americans
- Dalila Medrano - Multicultural Outreach Coordinator, Chesterfield County
- Liliana Penalver - Senior Program Consultant, Office of New Americans
- Lisa Ramirez – Senior Vice President Community Impact, YMCA of Greater Richmond
- Karla Ramos - Manager, Richmond City Office of Immigrant and Refugee Engagement
- Amir Saeed - Chief Information Officer, ICNA Relief
- Wendy Shoaf - Procurement Specialist, Department of Social Services
- Monica Smith-Callahan – Deputy County Manager Community Outreach Henrico County
- Kathy Tran – Delegate, General Assembly – District 42
- Raina Vann - Multicultural Community Liaison, Henrico County
- Michel Zajur – President and CEO, Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Freddy Mejia, MSW, Deputy Director of Policy, The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis
- Ben Barber, Policy Director and Natisha Knight, Vice President of Community Engagement and Advocacy, Virginia Health Catalyst
- Dr. Zachary Hairston, Dental Consultant and Justin Gist, Dental Program Manager, Department of Medical Assistance Services

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS ADVISORY BOARD COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCESS TO SERVICES

The Access to Services (A2S) Committee focuses on building awareness of the specific barriers that newcomers face in accessing services and resources. The committee reviews potential solutions and best practices that will address these barriers, improve equitable access, and maximize the community members' potential.

In 2023, the A2S explored two areas where New Americans need better access to (1) healthcare and (2) English Language Learning.

Healthcare Recommendations:

Ensure that New Americans can access, understand, and use health related information AND that healthcare professionals understand how to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate health information.

- Perform health literacy assessments of New American communities.
 - Based on the results, determine best practices for ensuring New Americans have access to information they need to make good health decisions
- Perform cultural and linguistic competency assessments of healthcare providers.
 - Based on the results, determine if Implicit Bias and Cultural Humility Continuing Medical Education should be a requirement for Virginia medical providers.

Ensure that all Medicaid eligible Virginians have access to dental health services.

- Create pathways and opportunities for more dental providers to be educated and offer services to Medicaid patients
- Emphasize a diverse dental health workforce that reflects Virginia's population
- Increase Medicaid reimbursement rates so that more Virginia dentists will accept Medicaid insured patients

Education Recommendations:

Improve access to English language learning for refugees and immigrants in Virginia.

- Provide specific avenues for local literacy programs to gain access and utilize federal and state funding
- Encourage public/private partnerships that could fund English classes and address barriers. For example, large employers of New Americans could partner with a literacy agency to provide onsite English for their employees.
- Dedicate one of the new Virginia Department of Education Lab schools to English Language Learning
- Facilitate transition from ESOL programs to institute of higher education by investing in Bridge Programs that address the English proficiency and college readiness needs of New Americans.
- Provide accessible information about associate and trade-based programs with a direct tie to the labor market and ensure high-demand courses are made known and opened to diverse groups.

SUPPORT HEALTHCARE

Access to appropriate healthcare is essential for all Americans to achieve their potential as one of the strongest workforces in the nation. New Americans are no different, and face specific types of barriers when accessing them.

New Americans need better access to health-related information.

What we do know is that cultural and linguistic barriers make it difficult for New Americans to understand and apply health related information, and that New American communities come to Virginia with different levels of health literacy. What we do not fully understand are the specific gaps in health literacy for specific New American communities. National assessments indicate that only 10% of all American adults have the skills to use everyday health information, and these assessments do not include Limited English Proficiency.¹⁵ For these reasons, there needs to be more culturally and linguistically appropriate research so that we can have a better understanding of the health literacy of New Americans in Virginia.

Healthcare Professionals need access to specific training to better serve patients with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Some healthcare facilities provide implicit bias and cultural humility training to their practitioners, but it is typically reactionary rather than preventive, and often only at the physical level. Research shows that mistakes that are made when practitioners and office staff do not understand how to communicate with their patients due to language and cultural barriers are very expensive and at the detriment of the patient and the practitioner.

Virginia's Interfaith Center for Public Policy has been leading the charge to address unconscious bias and cultural humility by recommending that all practitioners receive at least 2 hours of continued Medical Education every two years. The legislation is already written with a House referral through the Department of Health Professions and a Senate referral through the Task Force on Maternal Health Data and Quality Measures—

Senate Bill No. 1440 was offered on January 11, 2023: *A BILL to amend and reenact § 54.1-2912.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Board of Medicine; continuing education; implicit bias and cultural competency in health care. Its patrons were Senators Locke and McClellan. It was referred to the Committee on Education and Health. It stated:*

The Board shall adopt and implement policies that require each practitioner licensed pursuant to this chapter who has direct contact with persons who are or may become pregnant to complete two hours of continuing education related to implicit bias and cultural competency in health care at least once every other license renewal cycle as provided in § 54.1-2904. For purposes of this subsection, "implicit bias" means a bias or prejudice that is present but not consciously held or recognized¹⁶.

On January 17, 2023, it was assigned to the Health Professions Subcommittee. On February 2, 2023 it was passed by indefinitely in the Committee on Education and Health (including Senator Locke), with a vote of 15 yeas, 0 nays, and 0 abstentions.

While this bill is not slated to move forward at this time, the A2S committee recommends the next step is to perform cultural and linguistic competency assessments of healthcare providers in order to further investigate the need for required training of healthcare professionals.

To inform future efforts, it is important to note that the Virginia Department of Education requires cultural competency training for employees and for licensure. As required by Code of Virginia § 22.1-298.7, no later than the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, each school board employee, including teachers, leaders, and other

¹⁵ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, [What Is Health Literacy?](#)

¹⁶ Virginia's Legislative Information System, [SENATE BILL NO. 1440](#)

licensed staff, is required to complete cultural competency training or instruction. In addition, effective July 1, 2023, every person seeking initial licensure or renewal of a license shall complete instruction or training in cultural competency. For more information, read [Senate Bill 1196](#) and [House Bill 1904](#). To meet the training as well as the initial and renewal license requirements, VDOE has developed a free online Cultural Competency Training Module. This module is accessible from PCs and Mac computers and some other types of mobile devices¹⁷.

Ensure that all Medicaid eligible Virginians have access to dental health services.

As reported in the ONAAB 2022 Annual Report, oral health is linked to overall health and needs to be expanded to all groups of people. Prior to Medicaid expansion, children and pregnant individuals were the only Medicaid groups with dental coverage. This lack of coverage came at a cost to Virginians. Lack of dental care led to costly emergency department visits: of the 16,000 Virginia Medicaid recipients that visited emergency rooms in 2018, more than half were treated for “non-traumatic dental conditions” like tooth aches and loose teeth. In addition, Virginia spent \$3.31 million on 12,617 visits to the ED for dental-related pain and infection. There are also racial disparities in dental care access and oral health outcomes. A recent study showed that 71% of Black adults in Virginia (45-64 years) report losing at least one tooth to infection in comparison to only 49.7% of white adults¹⁸.

Over the past year, Committee member Dr. Hauck has been in touch with various experts in the Commonwealth to gather more data about dental coverage, benefits under Medicaid, number of patients enrolled, and number of dentists enrolled and accepting patients. Her full report of her findings is attached as an addendum (A) to this document, but a summary of her findings are as follows:

- While a budget amendment¹⁹ from 2022 increased Medicaid reimbursement for dental services by 30% starting in July 2022, the reality is that more than 12% of dentists who say they accept Medicaid don’t actually serve a patient with Medicaid.
- While interpreter services are available through DentaQuest, dentists need to schedule an interpreter and then submit a claim for reimbursement, creating a process that requires a large amount of paperwork.
- While DMAS recently released a comprehensive report in November 2022²⁰ that reviewed issues related to accessing Medicaid and FAMIS Dental Benefits, there is limited information on access of immigrants and refugees to dental services. For example, there are several areas of Virginia where New Americans are living that do not have access to an adequate number of dentists who accept and actually see patients with Medicaid.

For the next year, the A2S Committee is interested in obtaining more complete data on the location of dentists who accept Medicaid and who serve newcomers in relation to where Virginia’s newcomers are located, to assess current access and needs. As per the DMAS report, there are barriers to dentists accepting Medicaid, and it is highly likely that the complicated mechanism to secure and get reimbursed for interpreters is a strong barrier. We recommend that additional surveying of dentists be done to specifically explore such potential barriers and to gain insights as to how these can be overcome. Continued dialogue with colleagues from DMAS is recommended and potential ways to collaborate on such a survey be explored.

¹⁷ Virginia Department of Education, [Mandatory Cultural Competency Training and Licensure Requirements](#)

¹⁸ Department of Medical Assistance Services, [Oral Health](#)

¹⁹ [304#19c \(DMAS\) Increase in Medicaid Dental Rates. HB30 - Conference Report \(virginia.gov\)](#)

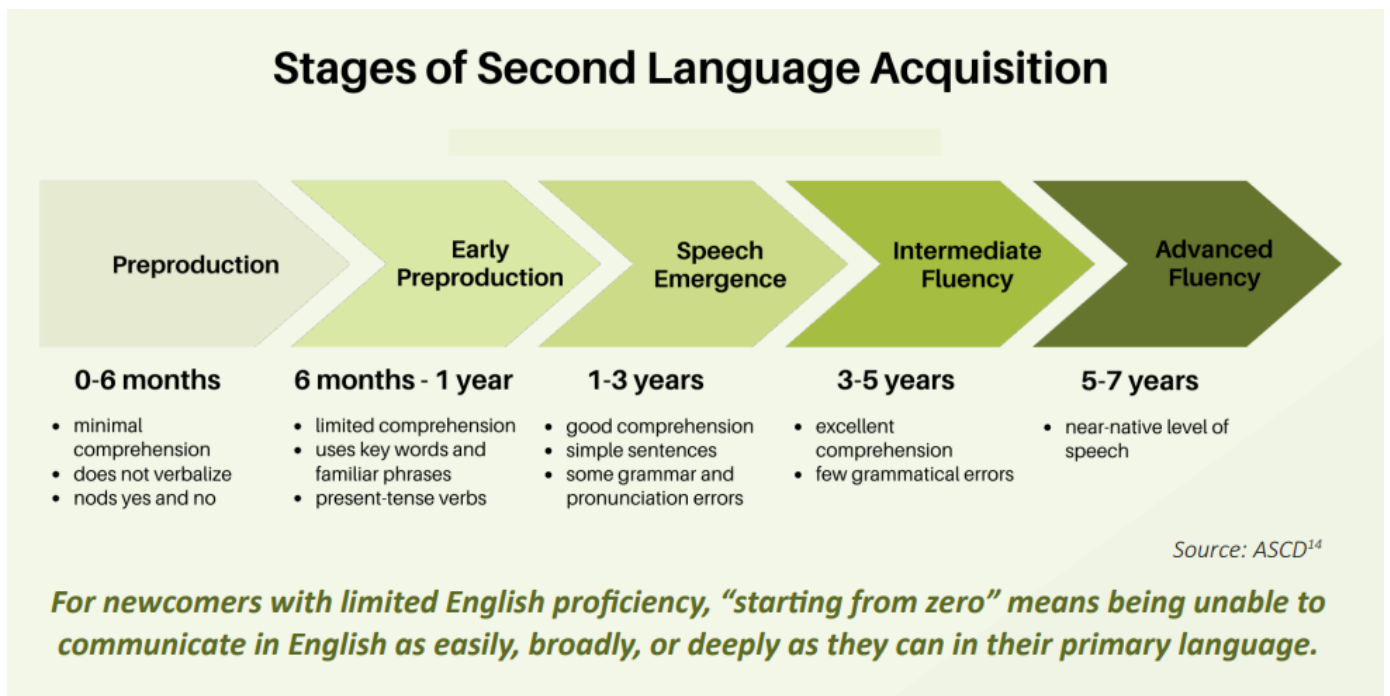
²⁰ Department of Medical Assistance Services, [A Review of Medicaid and FAMIS Dental Benefits to Determine Any Issues Related to Access](#)

SUPPORT ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

A report published in 2022 about the integration outcomes of forcibly displaced persons²¹ cites that English language acquisition was the number one priority of New Americans, but cited an overwhelming need for more dedicated time and support to learn English.

Learning a new language is a lengthy, arduous process. Understanding vocabulary words is one thing. Being able to follow a spoken conversation, recall corresponding words, and use them correctly in a sentence is another. Research shows that it can take 3-5 years of intensive study to reach intermediate level fluency²².

Figure 7.



Source: Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners: Facilitator’s Guide, Chapter 2: The Stages of Second Language Acquisition

Common barriers to learning English include lack of transportation and childcare, not enough time in class, and lack of qualified teachers. Many community-based organizations that offer English classes only have funding to offer classes once a week and often rely on unqualified volunteers to teach and tutor students. In addition, many New Americans spend more than full time hours working to support their family, leaving even less time to study and learn English.

It is clear that New Americans are eager to learn English, but lack of accessible English classes make it difficult for them to learn higher levels of proficiency. When considering accessibility, the following things should be taken into consideration:

- Locations of classes in proximity to where Newcomer Communities live and work
- Hours of class time offered

²¹ Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative, [Integration Outcomes for Forcibly Displaced Persons](#)

²²Hill, J.D. and Björk, C.L. (2008) [Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners: Facilitator’s Guide, Chapter 2: The Stages of Second Language Acquisition](#), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development,

- Teacher certification requirements to teach classes
- Levels of English offered

Ensure that New Americans can access higher education programs.

Community colleges are a key point of access to higher education for many ESOL learners due to their affordability and flexible options. However, lower levels of English proficiency, academic readiness, and digital skills make the transition to community colleges more challenging for ESOL learners than native English speakers²³. Moreover, Adult ESOL learners often lack knowledge about the US college system, available course and career pathways, financial aid programs and their obligations. Additionally, immigrants and refugees often have limited social networks to guide them through the complex college application and enrollment process²⁴. Bridge classes built upon the skills learners acquire in ESOL classes and follow the College and Career Readiness Standards to provide learners with the skills needed for full engagement in English language arts, literacy, mathematics, and science. As such Bridge classes are well-suited to address our community's increased demand for affordable and high-quality ESOL services and provides English proficiency, college readiness skills, and mentorship support needed for a successful transition to higher education settings. These services support immigrant and refugee's socio cultural integration, promote socio-economic mobility²⁵, and ultimately enhance our community's overall quality of life.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Economic issues loom large for immigrants and can disproportionately motivate the difficult decision to leave their country. Even when other issues serve as proximate causes for migration – e.g., ethnic, or political persecution – economic motives typically remain important. As with other Virginians, our New Americans pursue economic opportunity primarily through employment and entrepreneurship. However, unlike the general populace, New Americans encounter more barriers to economic opportunity due to language and cultural barriers in addition to lack of access to capital and corporate or business competencies.

The Economic Opportunity Committee explores the economic landscape and reviews what support is provided by the Commonwealth for New American workforce development and entrepreneurs. Most importantly, this committee assesses where barriers exist and provides recommendations to address these barriers.

Workforce Development Recommendations

- Through Budgetary action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans and the Department of Labor to study employment and educational history of New Americans to determine focus of career pathway programs, and New American capacity to fill employment gaps in the state.
- Through Budgetary action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans, the Department of Labor, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, and the Department of Education to explore further

²³ American Institutes for Research. [\(2018\) Serving English language learners in higher education: unlocking the potential](#); American Institutes for Research. [\(2016\) English language proficiency standards for adult education](#).

²⁴ Liebert, S. and Grant, R. (2022) [Barriers to Integration of Virginia’s Immigrants: Challenges and Opportunities Identified through a Needs Assessment](#), VCU Douglas L. Wilder School of Government and Policy

²⁵ Teranishi, R. T., Suárez-Orozco, C., & Suárez-Orozco, M. (2011). [Immigrants in community college: Toward greater knowledge and awareness](#). *The Future of Children*, 21(1), 153–169.

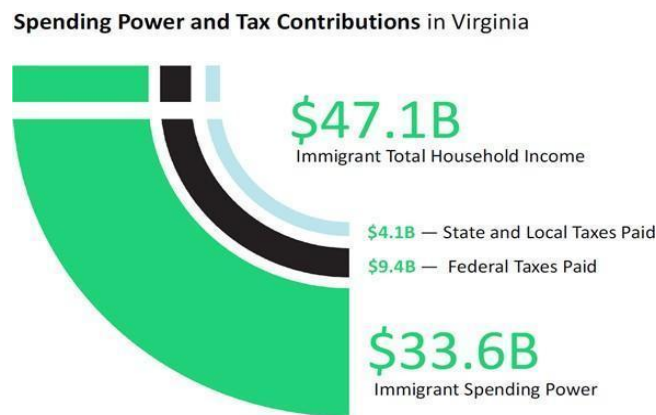
opportunities to recruit New American talent and retain them through statewide employment initiatives.

- Through Budgetary action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans and the Department of Labor to review licensing and certification criteria and develop, translate, and disseminate career pathway maps

SUPPORT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

In our 2021 Annual Report we noted that when New Americans are employed in our businesses or able to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams, they generate billions of dollars in revenue or income, tax payment, and consumer spending. These economic contributions support our state and local governments, our private sector, and our public infrastructure.

Figure 8.



Source: *New American Economy Report to ONAAB 1/6/21*

The ONAAB has explored the critical economic areas of workforce development and entrepreneurial support. We believe that there are significant opportunities to support these areas. Which in turn will provide better returns on the investment in these communities.

As the world continues to change around us, we also see changes in the attitudes towards the New American population that other states have embraced. Since 2014, Michigan has adopted an aggressive talent acquisition and retention program for New Americans. Former Governor Rick Snyder specifically created Michigan's Office of New Americans to address the loss of talent and skilled employees due to the downturn in the automotive industry.

Similarly, fifteen states have also created Offices of New Americans or other offices to focus on successful immigrant integration. These states are California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin, and Virginia²⁶.

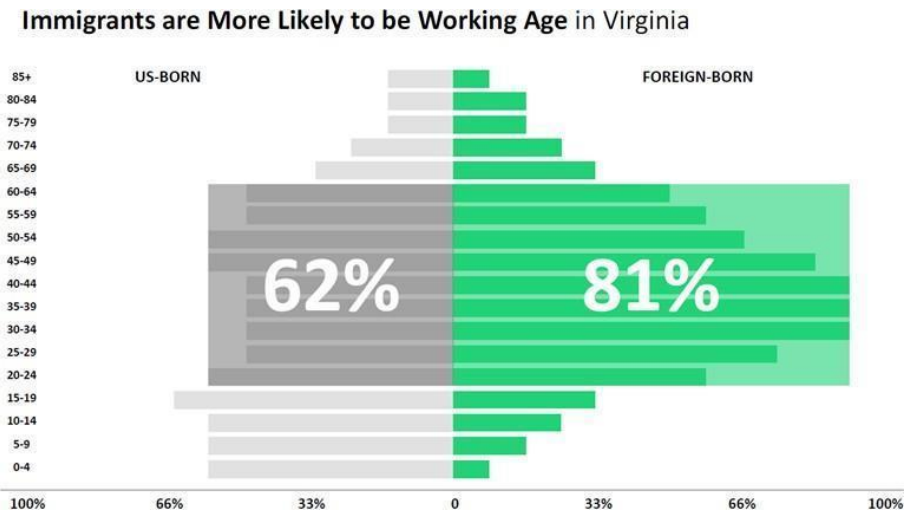
Leaders in these states have looked at their changing demographics, and have concluded that leveraging growing New American populations will result in increased talent, skills and resources. These valuable elements can allow economies to better compete in the national and global market. Virginia must attract and retain New American talent. Here are some compelling reasons why this is important to the Commonwealth:

²⁶ American Immigration Council, [Office of New Americans \(ONA\) State Network - New American Economy](#)

Working Age Population

Since 2000, immigrant workers and their children have become the major contributors to our workforce growth.²⁷ The average age of the native-born population in the Commonwealth has steadily increased as the baby boomers have progressed towards retirement age. Figure 9 illustrates the demographic trends that make our New American workforce even more critical to sustained economic growth for the Commonwealth and nation.

Figure 9.



Source: *New American Economy Report to ONAAB 1/6/21*

Engagement Across Industries

New American workers are engaged in all industries. Depending on skill sets, education and past opportunities, our New American workers range from laborers to professionals. According to a Joint Economic Committee report from 2021 (Figure 10), our national immigrant workforce represents significant portions of our essential work sectors.

Figure 10.

Immigrants Disproportionately Work in "Essential" Sectors	
Sector	Share of Workers Who Are Immigrants
Manufacturing	19%
Transportation and Utilities	20%
Professional and Business Services	21%
Leisure and Hospitality	21%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	23%
Construction	28%
Overall	18%

Source: *Joint Economic Committee "Immigrants are Vital to the US Economy" 4/26/21*

²⁷Singer, A. and Myers, D. (2016), [Labor Force growth increasingly depends on migrants and their children](#), Urban Institute

This has not been more apparent than during the last 2 years of the Covid-19 pandemic. Reports show that during the pandemic, New American health care workers were disproportionately responsible for in-person care and were essential workers on the front lines. Nationally, New Americans make up 38 percent of home health aides, 29 percent of physicians and 22 percent of nursing assistants.²⁸ In Virginia, where New Americans making up 12.7 percent of the population, 29.4 percent are physicians and surgeons, 18.7 percent are health aides and 14.0% are nurses.²⁹ New Americans are disproportionately responsible for in-person health care, This underscoring the availability and type of talent that resides within the New American workforce.

National efforts are being made to highlight this bridge to global talent. Initiatives such as World Education Services Global Talent Bridge³⁰ are increasingly focusing on the economic benefits of immigration. World Education Services Global Talent Bridge is dedicated to helping skilled immigrants fully utilize their talents and education to achieve professional and academic goals. They focus on uplifting these skilled workers through their Skilled Immigrant Integration Program³¹.

Virginia was recently a participant in this program focused on supporting foreign-born educators to help fill teacher shortages in our public-school systems. The number of Virginia teacher vacancies exceeded 2,500 teaching positions in the 2021-2022 school year³². And for the 2022-2023 school year, the top 10 critical teaching shortages include Elementary Education K-6, Middle School Grade 6-8, Mathematics Grades 6-12, Science, and Foreign Language PreK-12. These are all areas that potential teachers from the New American workforce can fill.

In order to help alleviate the Commonwealth's teacher shortage, Senate Bill 68 permits the Board of Education to provide a provisional license to educators who were certified or licensed to teach within the last 5 years³³. Fortunately, SB 68 was passed by the General Assembly and signed by Governor Youngkin to help alleviate the Commonwealth's teacher shortage.

Talent Acquisition

There are many avenues for attracting talent. Some occur organically, while others are driven by employers. The Commonwealth has several initiatives focused on the attraction of talent to the state. The Virginia Economic Development Partnership and Department of Labor are leading many talent acquisition initiatives that focus on developing talent and putting them to work. Even with programs like Virginia's Tech Talent Investment Program³⁴, Virginia Talent Accelerator Program³⁵, and Virginia Career Works³⁶ there are still more opportunities to attract, develop and retain talent within the New American communities.

While the foreign-born are 12.7 percent of Virginia's population, 22.8 percent of STEM workers are New Americans. While this signals that we are attracting talent, we are not leveraging one of our best resources – our

²⁸ Batalova, J. (2020) [Immigrant Workers: Vital to the U.S. COVID-19 Response, Disproportionately Vulnerable](#), Migration Policy Institute

²⁹ Rich, A. (2021) [New Americans in Virginia - An overview of immigrants' contributions to the commonwealth](#), New American Economy

³⁰ World Education Services, [Global Talent Bridge](#)

³¹ World Education Services, [Skilled Immigrant Integration Program](#)

³² Virginia Department of Education, [VDOE Staffing and Vacancy Report](#)

³³ Favola, B. (2022) [SB 68 Provisional teacher licensure: teachers licensed or certified outside of the United States.](#), Virginia Legislative Information System

³⁴ Virginia Economic Development Partnership, [Virginia's Tech Talent Investment Program](#)

³⁵ Virginia Economic Development Partnership, [Virginia Talent Accelerator Program](#)

³⁶ [Virginia Career Works](#)

centers of higher education – to do so. Each year, almost 600,000 patents are filed by companies, research centers and institutes of higher learning³⁷. And in a study from by the New American Economy in 2012 these details are compelling:

- 76 percent of the patents had a foreign-born inventor.
- 54 percent of the patents were awarded to the group of foreign inventors most likely to face visa hurdles: students, postdoctoral fellows, or staff researchers.
- Foreign-born inventors played significant roles in the fields of semiconductor device manufacturing (87 percent), information technology (84 percent), pulse or digital communications (83 percent), pharmaceutical drugs or drug compounds (79 percent) and optics (77 percent).
- The nearly 1,500 patents represented inventors from 88 different countries.

From 2012 until 2021, the number of international students in the United States rose from 819,644³⁸ to 914,095³⁹. Virginia has some of the highest ranked universities and colleges in the country, yet Virginia is not a top 10 destination for international students, and no Virginia higher education institution is within the top 20 schools for international students⁴⁰. This is a lost opportunity to attract talent to the Commonwealth and potentially retain them as a highly educated and skilled workforce.

There is opportunity to leverage our notable universities and colleges to become talent attractors.

Worker Licensure

Another avenue for attracting talent is to find ways to leverage the talent that already exists in the Commonwealth. Many New Americans who come to the Commonwealth possess valuable skills and experience. Unfortunately, these skills and experience are not being utilized due to specific education or certification requirements. As noted earlier, recent legislation (SB68) has created pathways for teachers who were licensed educators in foreign countries to work provisionally in Virginia to help alleviate an area of dire need. There are many other industries that have similar needs. Virginia Career Works and the Virginia Office of Education Economics has identified a list of high demand occupations for 2021-2022⁴¹. This list includes several areas of need that we have already noted as areas the New Americans have excelled:

- Business/Finance
- Education
- Computers/Math/Engineering
- Construction
- Healthcare
- Production and Transportation/Material Moving³⁷

If Virginia could address opportunities and create career pathways to licensure and employment in these areas, we could address some areas of greatest need while leveraging valuable skills and experience available in the New American communities.

³⁷ U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, [U.S. Patent Activity Calendar Years 1790 to the Present](#)

³⁸ Ruiz, N. G. (2014) [The Geography of Foreign Students in U.S. Higher Education: Origins and Destinations](#), Brookings Institute

³⁹ Open Doors, [2021 Fast Facts: International Students](#)

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Virginia Economic Development Partnership, [Virginia's 2021-2022 High Demand Occupations List and Underlying Methodology Report](#)

The Global Michigan Office has created these pathways and have made the information readily accessible through their Career Pathway Guides through their Licensing and Regulatory Affairs office⁴². Here, immigrant residents can find more than 40 Career Pathway Guides to chart a path to licensure and, in some cases, create simplified pathways to licensure.

INTER/INTRA GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Everyone in the Commonwealth is impacted by federal, state, and local policies and rules, but it can be especially difficult for New Americans because of their unfamiliarity with state government offices and programs, and / or their lack of language ability. The Office of New Americans has been given the primary responsibility to address the needs of New Americans as they are required to:

Provide advice and assistance to state agencies regarding (i) the coordination of relevant policies across state agencies responsible for education, workforce, and training programs, including professional licensure guidance, small business development, worker protection, refugee resettlement, citizenship and voter education or engagement programs, housing programs, and other related programs, and (ii) the dissemination of information to localities and immigration service organizations regarding state programs that help New Americans find and secure employment, housing, and services for which they may be eligible;

Our board recommends two areas as priorities for the coming year:

1. Develop programs and resources that will highlight the benefits of and the process for applying for U.S. citizenship.
2. Develop a statewide language access plan with administrative oversight.

U.S. Citizenship Recommendations

- ONA should highlight the existing U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) Citizenship Resource Material on the ONA website and in any other related state agency websites or materials.
- ONA should explore working directly with the USCIS Office of Citizenship and Applicant Information Services to use their resources, and/or develop other resources specific to Virginia, to promote naturalization at community events, meetings, etc.
- Through Budgetary Action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans to develop programs that will promote naturalization, highlight, and utilize existing USCIS Office of Citizenship Resources and Application Services, and provide technical support to those applying for citizenship.

Language Access Recommendations

- The Office of New American Advisory Board recommends that the Virginia Governor empower the Office of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion to create and provide oversight of a statewide language access plan, in partnership with the Office of New Americans and the Office of New Americans Advisory Board, that would provide guidance and expectations for agency and department language access plans throughout the government of Virginia. The statewide language access plan would also include procurement policies and review of Code for provisions that would limit or restrain the implementation of a statewide language access plan. This would then be accompanied by legislative action for compliance provisions.

⁴² Michigan Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, [An Online Resource for Skilled Immigrant](#)
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- The Office of New American Advisory Board recommends that adequate funding be provided to fully staff the Office of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion to oversee the compliance of agencies and departments within the statewide language access plan. The ODOI would also be tasked with the periodic review of the statewide language access plan for compliance with federal guidelines and current best practices.

SUPPORT U.S. CITIZENSHIP

The civic and political integration of New Americans is curtailed if those eligible decide not to naturalize, which, among other benefits, allows them to vote and run for office. We know that economic integration is lower for non-citizens in Virginia compared to those adopting citizenship, but it is not known whether citizenship status alone confers this benefit or whether it is due to other personal characteristics.⁴³ The average income was much higher for households headed by naturalized citizens in 2022 (\$112,400) than for non-citizens (\$83,800). In addition, Virginia’s naturalized citizens had a poverty rate of 7.5 percent compared to 15.2 percent for non-citizens.

The National Academy of Sciences has reported that “naturalization rates in the United States lag behind other countries that receive substantial numbers of immigrants” and that “(t)his is surprising since the vast majority of immigrants, when surveyed, report wanting to become a U.S. citizen.”⁴⁴ There are approximately 470,000 lawful permanent residents (“green-card holders” or immigrants) in Virginia as of 2022, and 190,000, or about 40 percent, are eligible to naturalize. This statistic demonstrates that there is a substantial number of VA immigrants who likely want to naturalize.

ONA’s authorizing code states that ONA shall provide advice and assistance to new Americans regarding (i) the citizenship application process and (ii) securing employment, housing, and services for which such persons may be eligible. The Board agrees that it is vital that Virginia provide citizenship application assistance to these 190,000 residents so that they can potentially apply to have all the rights and responsibilities, as native-born Virginians. We concur that ONA should work towards providing assistance on employment and housing, but we believe there is a special opportunity to provide citizenship assistance by working in collaboration with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS),

USCIS, the federal agency responsible for citizenship applications, already has a comprehensive website, the Citizenship Resource Center⁴⁵, with a collection of helpful resources and free study materials for a variety of users including:

- Immigrants who are interested in becoming U.S. citizens. Lawful permanent residents (LPRs) will find information about the naturalization process, eligibility requirements, and study materials to prepare for the naturalization interview and test.
- Educators who play a critical role in preparing learners. Educators including teachers, volunteers, and program administrators will find several resources for the classroom. Educators can also search for free

⁴³ Sumption, Madeleine and Sarah Flamm. 2012. *The Economic Value of Citizenship for Immigrants in the United States*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. [The Economic Value of Citizenship for Immigrants in the United States \(migrationpolicy.org\)](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/publications/the-economic-value-of-citizenship-for-immigrants-in-the-united-states)

⁴⁴ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2015. [The Integration of Immigrants into American Society](https://www.nationalacademies.org/2015/05/the-integration-of-immigrants-into-american-society). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: 10.17226/21746, page 11.

⁴⁵ [Citizenship Resource Center | USCIS](https://uscis.gov/citizenship-resource-center)

USCIS training seminars designed to enhance the skills needed to teach U.S. history, civics, and the naturalization process to immigrant students.

- Organizations that are interested in supporting immigrants in becoming citizens and assisting them to integrate into American civic society. Whether an organization is just beginning to help immigrants on their journey towards citizenship or is an experienced service provider, they will find resources to help enhance their overall efforts and programs.

The study materials and resources are available in languages other than English including Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. USCIS also has an on-line guide for New Americans to help them integrate to life in the United States (See Settling in the U.S. | USCIS⁴⁶). The material offers helpful information about education, child care, employment, what to do in case of an emergency, and a number of popular topics that will help new immigrants settle in the U.S.

SUPPORT A STATEWIDE LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

The authorizing code for the Office of New American Advisory Board states:

The purpose of the Board is to advise the Governor, cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to improve state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

In our earlier two reports, ONAAB has noted that limited English proficiency is one of the key barriers for the successful economic and civic integration of New Americans into the Commonwealth. There are roughly 1 million foreign born individuals in the Commonwealth and these linguistic and cultural barriers impact practically every aspect of the New American experience.

Our assessment is that there are three primary reasons why there is a need for enhanced and more effective linguistic integration of New Americans through a comprehensive state language access plan.

- Legal and compliance
- Moral and ethical
- Economic opportunity

Legal and Compliance - In our system of government, many state and local services depend upon federal grants to provide services and resources. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ensures the right to language access for individuals with limited English Proficiency (LEP) [Civil Rights Act of 1964⁴⁷, Public Law 88-352, US Statutes at Large 78 (1964)]. Additionally, Executive Order 13166 of August 11, 2000, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited Proficiency [The President and U.S. Department of Justice, “Executive Order 13166-Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency⁴⁸,” Federal Register 65, no. 159, August 16, 2000] - expands and ensures meaningful access to federally funded services and resources.

⁴⁶ [Settling in the U.S. | USCIS](#)

⁴⁷ [Civil Rights Act \(1964\) | National Archives](#)

⁴⁸ [Civil Rights Division | Executive Order 13166 \(justice.gov\)](#)

The order “requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. It is expected that agency plans will provide for such meaningful access consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency. The Executive Order also requires that the Federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries.”

Additional guidance has been released in the form of the “Memorandum for Heads of Federal Agencies, Heads of Civil Rights Offices and General Counsels,” [United States Attorney General and Department of Justice, “Memorandum for Heads of Federal Agencies, Heads of Civil Rights Offices and General Counsels”⁴⁹,” November 21, 2022]“ published by Attorney General Merrick Garland on November 21, 2022. In the memorandum, this guidance for Executive Order 13166 states:

“ the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights will work collaboratively with agencies to help determine: (i) whether agencies can further update their language access policies and plans; (ii) whether agencies are effectively reaching individuals with limited English proficiency when disseminating information about federal resources, programs, and services; (iii) whether agencies have considered updates or modifications to guidance to federal financial assistance recipients regarding their obligations to provide meaningful language access under the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations; and (iv) whether agencies can adapt their digital communications to welcome individuals with limited English proficiency.”

This renewed focus on addressing linguistic barriers for LEP individuals has prompted federal agencies to review and assess not only their own language access plans, but also the language access provisions and plans of the state agencies and departments that receive funds granted by those federal agencies. As a result, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) has received inquiries into its language access plans. It should be noted that the VDSS does not currently have a language access plan however, plans are in place for the hiring of a language access coordinator to address language access opportunities at the VDSS.

At this time, the ONAAB is unaware of any other Commonwealth agencies or departments who have received similar inquiries, however we are certain that this may soon change. According to the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget, federal grants are the largest source of non general fund revenue and comprises roughly 40% of our biennial budget [Virginia Department of Planning and Budget, 2020 Appropriation Act. (Chapter 56, 2020 Special Session I, Acts of Assembly)] . These grants help finance a broad range of services, including health care, education, social services, infrastructure, and public safety. Therefore we can assume state agencies that receive federal funds in those areas will be asked to review their language access plans.

Moral and Ethical - From the early infancy of the United States of America (USA), throughout its history, and to the present day, the USA has stood forth as the land of opportunity. And upon the talent and contributions of the many generations of immigrants and New Americans, that belief has held true. The world’s “huddled masses” have been reborn as Americans and have uplifted the United States as a global leader. This promise was enshrined in the very founding documents that still inspire and govern us today, the Declaration of Independence, our Constitution and

⁴⁹ [Attorney General Memorandum - Strengthening the Federal Government's Commitment to Language Access \(justice.gov\)](#)

the Bill of Rights contained within. These fundamental rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness continue to be the basis for our nation and system of government.

For New Americans, limited English proficiency may pose serious obstacles to integrating into American life and the pursuit of the American Dream. When these individuals do not have the same access to resources, services, and information that other Americans enjoy, that creates a moral and ethical issue.

The Commonwealth has the 10th largest New American population in the country [Migration Policy Institute (MPI) tabulation of data from U.S. Census Bureau⁵⁰, 2010 and 2021 American Community Surveys (ACS), and 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census]. With just over one million New Americans, this constitutes roughly 12.4% of the Commonwealth's population. This is a significant portion of the Commonwealth's population that will be prevented from advancing their futures to the benefit of the Commonwealth and Nation. This presents not only the aforementioned moral and ethical dilemma, but more importantly an economic one.

Economic Opportunity - In the previous sections of this report, we have noted that the New American population represents significant workforce and economic contributions to the Commonwealth. To best leverage this talent, we need to invest in the development of this talent. By developing and executing a language access plan that not only helps provide better access to resources and information, the Commonwealth can further develop our job ready workforce by promoting and supporting English language acquisition.

Many states have already created, or are creating, initiatives that enhance English language acquisition as a workforce development tool to attract and retain their international talent. Virginia would be wise to do the same. Some of these include:

- Washington State's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training⁵¹ (I-BEST) This program allows technical faculty and basic skills instructors to design and teach college-level occupational classes which increase the rate at which adult basic education and English as a Second Language learners advance on higher level learning and complete postsecondary credentials.
- Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity High Speed Internet Office's Digital Equity Plan⁵² that addresses digital divide issues while also addressing limited English proficiency, workforce development and broadband connectivity.
- Colorado's SB 22-140 Expansion of Experiential Learning Opportunities⁵³. This bill addresses the labor shortage in Colorado through various initiatives including targeting the 20% of Coloradans that speak a language other than English at home. This addressing of language barriers through the alignment of education and employment will address immediate access to talent for employers.

As noted in the previous Economic Opportunity section, "*Leaders in these states have looked at their changing demographics, and have concluded that leveraging these growing New American populations will result in*

⁵⁰ [Immigrant Population by State, 1990-Present | migrationpolicy.org](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/immigrant-population-by-state-1990-present)

⁵¹ [Integrated Basic Education Skills and Training \(I-BEST\) | SBCTC](https://www.sbctc.org/Integrated-Basic-Education-Skills-and-Training-(I-BEST)-|)

⁵² <https://www.michigan.gov/leo/-/media/Project/Websites/leo/Documents/MIHI/DE-Plan---DRAFT.pdf>

⁵³ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb22-140>

increased talent, skills and resources. These valuable elements can allow economies to better compete in the national and global market. Virginia must attract and retain New American talent.”

The Need for a Virginia Statewide Language Access Plan

In the 2004 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly (JLARC) report *Acclimation of Virginia Foreign Born Populations*, it was noted that

“Under Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, agencies in receipt of any amount of federal funding are required to ensure that persons with a limited command of English are not denied meaningful access to benefits and services as a result of their English abilities.”

This is true, however if we consider the value of New Americans as our workforce, innovators, international and cultural advisors, entrepreneurs, and economic drivers, it makes sense to look at addressing issues such as language access and cultural competencies as investments into these valuable assets. We need to understand that the engagement with these individuals are not a few years, but rather for generations as they grow, mature and become significant producers and assets to the Commonwealth. This development of a continuum of integration for Virginia’s workforce so they feel welcomed and flourish.

The previously mentioned 2004 JLARC report, along with the recommendations made in the VCU Study on Ensuring Language Access Equity in Virginia Government Services report from 2021, acknowledged that the Commonwealth does not have a comprehensive or coordinated state language access plan. Recommendations made in 2004 are still true today, and have not been implemented.

State Language Access Plan: Without a state language access plan, agencies and departments have developed individual plans of varying consistency and effectiveness. In the VCU Study, eight state agencies/departments had existing language plans; 4 had plans in progress and 6 had elements of language access plans. These are shown here.

Agencies with Existing Plans (8)	Agencies with Plans in Progress (4)	Agencies with Plan Elements (6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circuit Courts • Court of Appeals • Department of Medical Assistance Services • Department of Motor Vehicles • Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission • Supreme Court of Virginia • Virginia Department of Health • Virginia Department of Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Corrections • Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation • Office of the Children's Ombudsman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired • Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing • Department of Education • Department of Elections • Department of Labor and Industry • Virginia Employment Commission

Source: Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, Virginia Commonwealth University, “Ensuring Language Access Equity in Virginia, 12-3-21

This is of high concern as there are more than 100 state agencies/departments within the government of Virginia. A significant number of outward facing agencies, who work with the general public and New American communities, do not have plans or even elements of a language access plan.

Even with the agencies that had existing plans, resources and efforts were inconsistent. Some agencies have documents translated into key languages, while others do not. Some agencies depend on telephonic language line resources for translation services while others employ bilingual staff. Some agencies look internally to develop their plans while others have contracted out to consulting firms.

Staff from these agencies do demonstrate a desire to address language and cultural competency issues. The Office of New Americans and Department of Social Services hosted a multi-stakeholder virtual roundtable on July 8, 2022. This event was titled “Developing a Framework for Language Access and Workforce Development Programs in Virginia” and included stakeholders from state and local agencies, resettlement agencies, health care organizations and other community-based organizations. The post event survey showed that:

- 73% of survey respondents agreed that Language Access was very important to their operations.
- 60% of survey respondents agreed that Workforce Development was important.
- 80% of survey respondents indicated that they would like to incorporate more language access resources into their work.

However, even though staff recognize the importance of Language Access and feel that they would like to incorporate more language access resources, they have not embraced opportunities to do so. In the previous budget for fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024, \$5 million dollars was budgeted for addressing language access issues. FY 2023 funds in the amount of \$2.5 million largely went unused and FY 2024 funds (\$2.5 million) are still available. This is of high concern for the ONAAB. Given that there has been a stated need for these funds, our agencies are unsure of how to utilize these funds, were unaware that the funding was available, or had no motivation to address language access concerns.

If we had a statewide language access plan, with specific agency responsibilities and key administrative guidelines (and high level agency and Administration support), these agencies and departments would have better guidance and accountability towards the development and intentional execution of agency/department-wide language access plans. The importance of a state-wide language access plan with executive level oversight is highlighted in a letter that was co-authored by the Chairs of the Virginia Office of New Americans Advisory Board, Virginia Asian Advisory Board, and the Virginia Latino Advisory Board. This letter was written and submitted to the Governor on January 17, 2023, and will be submitted with this report as an addendum(B).

The Office of New American Advisory Board recommends that the Virginia Governor empower the Office of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion to create and provide oversight of a statewide language access plan, in partnership with the Office of New Americans and the Office of New Americans Advisory Board, that would provide guidance and expectations for agency and department language access plans throughout the government of Virginia. The state language access plan would also include procurement policies and review of Code for provisions that would limit or restrain the implementation of state language access plan. This would then be accompanied by legislative action for compliance provisions.

OVERSIGHT OF A STATE LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

In both the JLARC study and the VCU study, there was a strong acknowledgement that a cabinet level oversight body be empowered to guidance and assistance to state and local agencies as well as limited English proficiency constituents to address language accessibility issues. This is incredibly important to provide consistency and overall quality of language access and cultural competency initiatives.

In the VCU study, it was recommended that this responsibility fall under the Governor's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which has since been reauthorized as the Governor's Office of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion (ODOI). The ONAAB highly supports this proposed oversight structure as it places the responsibility of such oversight directly under the Governor's Executive team and provides appropriate importance to the issues within this arena.

However, the ODOI is currently understaffed as it counts only one staff member, Deputy Chief Officer Michael Perez outside of the Chief Diversity Officer Martin Brown. The office is charged with the role of promoting ideas, policies, and economic opportunities for all Virginians. To add these additional responsibilities to oversee the state language access plan would require additional staffing to help create, support, and enforce the provisions of the plan.

The ONAAB would embrace the opportunity to assist in the development and review of a state language access plan. As individuals who work closely with communities often confronted with language access and cultural barriers to public resources and services, we are uniquely qualified to provide input into a comprehensive and consistent plan for the Commonwealth.

The Office of New American Advisory Board recommends that adequate funding be provided to fully staff the Office of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion to oversee the compliance of agencies and departments within the state language access plan. The ODOI would also be tasked with the periodic review of the state language access plan for compliance with federal guidelines and current best practices.

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Amend the Code to allow for more meetings per year. [Legislative] Current code limits meetings of the Board to four per year. Allowing for more meetings will assist with more collaborative and focused engagement of the Board and Committees. This would also make the operational limitations of the Board consistent with the Code that governs the other advisory boards. Virginia Asian Advisory Board §2.2-2449, Virginia African American Advisory Board §2.2-2492, Virginia Council on Women §2.2-2630, Virginia Latino Advisory Board §2.2-2459, and Virginia LGBTQ+ Advisory Board §2.2-2499.1

Amend the Code to raise the number of appointed non legislative citizen Board members to twenty-one. [Legislative] This would be consistent with the other advisory boards which have 21 appointed citizen board members. This would also allow for more subject matter expertise and engagement in our committee work. Virginia Asian Advisory Board §2.2-2449, Virginia African American Advisory Board §2.2-2492, Virginia Council on Women §2.2-2630, Virginia Latino Advisory Board §2.2-2459, and Virginia LGBTQ+ Advisory Board §2.2-2499.1

Amend the Code to include additional ex-officio members to the Board. [Legislative] The current ex-officio members include the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and the Chairs of the Virginia Asian Advisory Board (VAAB), Virginia African American Advisory Board (VAAAF), Virginia Council on Women (VCW) and Virginia Latino Advisory Board (VLAB). These are welcome additions to the Board. However, like the other advisory boards, the work of the Board involves a multitude of considerations in multiple agencies across multiple secretariats. The other advisory boards have representatives from relevant secretariats represented as ex-officio members. Virginia Asian Advisory Board §2.2-2449, Virginia African American Advisory Board §2.2-2492, Virginia Council on Women §2.2-2630, Virginia Latino Advisory Board §2.2-2459, and Virginia LGBTQ+ Advisory Board §2.2-2499.1

Current Ex-Officio Member Assignments

VAAB	VAAAB	VCW	VLAB	VLGBTQ+AB
Commerce & Trade	Commerce & Trade	Appointed by Governor	Commerce & Trade	Commerce & Trade
Commonwealth	Commonwealth		Commonwealth	Commonwealth
Education	Education		Education	Education
Health and Human Resources	Health and Human Resources		Health and Human Resources	Health and Human Resources
Public Safety and Homeland Security	Public Safety and Homeland Security		Public Safety and Homeland Security	Public Safety and Homeland Security
			Transportation	

As the responsibilities of the Board also involve work with agencies under specific secretariats, it is recommended

that the code be amended to include ex-officio members representing:

- Commerce and Trade
- Education
- Health and Human Resources
- Labor
- Public Safety and Homeland Security
- Transportation
- Virginia LGBTQ+ Advisory Board

Amend the Code governing Freedom of Information Act to allow for electronic meetings for subcommittee work of advisory boards as defined by Code §2.2-2100. [Legislative] By definition, advisory boards, commissions and councils are non-policy making bodies, but may participate in the development of public policy by providing comment and advice. The Board understands that FOIA exists at the intersection of efficiency and transparency in government. We also believe in that accountability. However, as noted previously, the application of the in person standard has deleterious impacts on the operation of a body that exists to help advise on policy and not serve in any regulatory or rule-making capacity.

Very recent changes to FOIA guidelines now permit public bodies to have two or one-quarter of all their meetings of a specific public body, whichever is more, as long as they are not consecutive. Under these guidelines, our General Board, Executive Committee, as well as our three additional Subcommittees are all considered their own separate public bodies. Despite these changes, our Board maintains that all Subcommittee meetings should be able to take place electronically.

In 2013, Senate Bill 1263 VA FOIA; meeting by electronic communication means by certain committees, etc. of State bodies was passed and introduced the following:

Virginia Freedom of Information Act; meeting by electronic communication means by certain committees, subcommittees, etc., of state public bodies; personal matters. Authorizes an advisory public body, defined as any state public body classified as advisory pursuant to § 2.2-2100 or any committee, subcommittee, or other entity, however designated, of a state public body created to advise the state public body, to meet by electronic communication means without a quorum of the advisory public body being physically assembled at one location, provided, among other requirements, the meeting is conducted utilizing a combined audio and visual communication method. The bill requires any advisory public body holding this kind of electronic communication meeting to make an audiovisual recording of the meeting, which recording shall be preserved by the advisory public body for a period of three years from the date of the meeting. The bill also enhances the annual reporting requirements for any public body authorized to conduct electronic communication meetings and requires the FOIA Council to develop a form that an authorized public body must make available to the public at any such meeting for public comment. The above-described provisions of the bill by its terms will expire on July 1, 2014. Finally, the bill allows a member of any public body to participate in a meeting by electronic communication means due to personal matters under certain circumstances. Currently, such remote participation is allowed only for emergency, medical condition, or distance from the meeting location of more than 60 miles. The bill is a recommendation of the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council.

This legislation passed both houses in 2013 and expired July 1, 2014. At the time of its sunset, no advisory bodies exercised the electronic meeting provisions due to the following:

- In 2013-2014, the use of online meeting platforms like Zoom, WebEx, Goto Meeting, Windows Teams and Google Meets were not readily available and technology requirements were unsurmountable without funding.
- Audio and visual recording mechanisms were not easily employed, and the preservation provisions were high bars to meet.

- Advisory boards had inconsistent access to resources and state staffing to assist with the management of the resources necessary to implement the opportunity.

The Board supports this recommendation for these reasons:

- During the Covid-19 state of emergency, the business of the administration was conducted effectively and in compliance with FOIA for the duration of the state of emergency.
- Online meeting platforms like Zoom, Goto Meeting, and Google Meets are now ubiquitous and employed with much success. Many of these services are free to access as attendees, and subscription costs are nominal for those hosting these online meetings.
- Employing electronic meeting resources makes the government MORE equitable and accessible while also preserving the FOIA requirement for recordkeeping and access.
- As an advisory body, the Board does not engage in any regulatory action or rulemaking.

ONAAB RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

Provide funding to commission a new JLARC study to assess the integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth and update the findings from the 2004 report. [Legislative] The 2004 JLARC study “Acclimation of Virginia’s Foreign-Born Population” provided the first snapshot of the foreign-born population and their adjustment to life in Virginia. The immigrant populations have almost doubled since the initial report was released in 2004. Additionally, the countries of origin of these newcomers are much more diverse and have added more complexities to the conversations around language access and cultural appropriateness of services and resources. We also have more multigenerational considerations regarding the New American populations as more immigrants and refugees make their homes in the Commonwealth.

A new JLARC study is incredibly important to developing the full scope of the ONA and connectivity with other agencies in the Administration. Additionally, while we recognize and appreciate that the VCU Needs Assessment Survey fills in some important gaps in data about New Americans in the Commonwealth today, our Board also recognizes that JLARC studies are the gold-standard for Virginia policymaking.

Enhance the Office of New Americans budget to address expanded and unmet needs. [Administrative, Budgetary, Legislative] Building a robust office of New Americans is essential in order to take advantage of the social and economic benefits New Americans bring to the Commonwealth. The Office of New Americans currently includes two staff under the direction of Director Seyoum Berhe. Increased funding will allow the office to continue to build capacity through hiring more staff, building a stronger administrative and programmatic infrastructure, and seeking funding to support programs that will benefit the integration of all New American communities across the Commonwealth.

Per the authorizing code outlined on page 8, the Office shall:

1. *Implement a statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth;*
2. *Work with localities to coordinate and support local efforts that align with the statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth;*
3. *Provide advice and assistance to New Americans regarding (i) the citizenship application process and (ii) securing employment, housing, and services for which such persons may be eligible;*
4. *Provide advice and assistance to state agencies regarding (i) the coordination of relevant policies across state agencies responsible for education, workforce, and training programs, including professional licensure guidance, small business development, worker protection, refugee resettlement, citizenship and voter education or engagement programs, housing programs, and other related programs, and (ii) the dissemination of information to localities and immigration service organizations regarding state programs that help New Americans find and secure employment, housing, and services for which they may be eligible;*
5. *Educate localities and immigration service organizations on health epidemics and unlawful predatory actions, such as human trafficking, gang recruitment, and fraudulent financial and other schemes, to which communities of such persons may be especially vulnerable;*
6. *Serve as the primary liaison with external stakeholders, particularly immigrant-serving and refugee serving organizations and businesses, on immigrant integration priorities and policies;* 7. *Partner with state agencies and immigrant-serving and refugee-serving organizations and businesses to identify and disseminate beneficial immigrant integration policies and practices throughout the Commonwealth;*
7. *Manage competitive grant programs that replicate beneficial practices or test new innovations that improve the effectiveness and efficacy of immigrant integration strategies; and*
8. *Advise the Governor, cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to improve state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the*

Commonwealth.

As noted earlier in the report, there are more than one million foreign born individuals living in the Commonwealth, roughly thirteen percent of the entire population of the state. Based upon the priorities outlined in the code, the ONA needs to increase capacities and resources to address these mandates.

As the ONA continues developing its strategic plan, the most immediate needs to support the necessary work would be to increase support to address unmet needs. The Board recommends the following:

Increase budget to enhance staffing to address issues affecting immigrant issues (\$2 million). The Office of New Americans needs additional capacity and personnel to address critical issues for all New Americans. The expected outlays would allow hiring of 3 Full Time Employees to work specifically on the following issues impacting New Americans.

- Orientation in the United States as a foundation of integration
- Job readiness training and placement
- Health information
- Language Access
- Education
- Citizenship education

Increase budget to create five regional staff positions (\$500,000 salary and benefits) This increase in staff capacity would create positions in the following regions:

- Northern Region
- Central Region
- Hampton Road and Eastern Region
- Southern and Southwest Regions
- Valley Region

Each staff member would work closely with existing Department of Social Services offices and nonprofit agencies, resettlement agencies, educational institutions, localities and other community partners in facilitating collaboration and ensuring that New Americans' needs are addressed in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. Additionally, the staff would:

- Provide technical support that includes training for funded and other immigrant serving agencies or organizations.
- Serve as navigators for New Americans and New American serving organizations regarding state services, links and resources.
- Conduct annual monitoring of funded agencies to provide oversight of contracted services.
- Identify and report opportunities and challenges in each region to ONA and state leadership.
- Report on activities and achievements in each region to ONA and state leadership.

Increase budget of the Office of New Americans to support the work of the Office of New Americans Advisory Board per code. (\$63,000) In the 2021-2022 budget, the ONA's budget included \$30,000 for expenses in support of the work of the Board. This provision is noted in the final engrossed impact statement.²⁶

Assuming the Board meets the maximum number of times prescribed by the bill (four times annually), annual expenses for all 18 members and five ex officio members are estimated to be \$30,000, based on updated travel costs for similar boards. These expenses include mileage, lodging, meals, and incidentals. DSS employees will likely

incur travel costs, as well, since the bill requires the agency to provide staff support to the Board. Annual DSS staff travel expenses are estimated at \$2,600 for a maximum of four meetings a year. Actual travel costs will depend on the number of times the Board actually meets.

As the Board is requesting a change to the meeting limitation and is expected to host six meetings per year, the budgeted costs for meetings and staff support should be increased 50% to \$45,000. It should also be noted that the staff travel expenses would also increase by roughly 50% to \$3,900.

In addition, the Board plans to host town halls and focus groups in the furtherance of its work. The costs to host town halls would be estimated to be \$4,500 per event to include facility rental, refreshments, recording costs, equipment rental, security and incidentals. Travel costs would not need to be considered as these town halls are expected to be hosted in concert with scheduled general board meetings. The expectation is to host four town halls per year therefore the budgeted request would be \$18,000 per year.

Therefore, the total budgetary enhancement for 2022-2023 would be \$2,563,000 in addition to the current budget for the Office of New Americans. Budget year 2023-2024 would include a similar budget enhancement and may include additional requested funding as further services and resources are developed.

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION INDEX

We have included these recommendations broken out into the types of actions that are needed.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Access to Services

Administrative

- Perform health literacy assessments of New American communities. Based on the results, determine best practices for ensuring New Americans have access to information they need to make good health decisions. (p.21)
- Perform cultural and linguistic competency assessments of healthcare providers. Based on the results, determine if Implicit Bias and Cultural Humility Continuing Medical Education should be a requirement for Virginia medical providers. (p.21)
- Emphasize a diverse dental health workforce that reflects Virginia’s population. (p.21)
- Provide specific avenues for local literacy programs to gain access and utilize federal and state funding. . (p.21)
- Encourage public/private partnerships that could fund English classes and address barriers. For example, large employers of New Americans could partner with a literacy agency to provide onsite English for their employees. (p.21)
- Dedicate one of the new Virginia Department of Education Lab schools to English Language Learning. (p.21)
- Facilitate transition from ESOL programs to institute of higher education by investing in Bridge Programs that address the English proficiency and college readiness needs of New Americans. (p.21)
- Provide accessible information about associate and trade-based programs with a direct tie to the labor market and ensure high-demand courses are made known and opened to diverse groups. (p.21)

Legislative

- Ensure that all Medicaid eligible Virginians have access to dental health services by
 - a. Create pathways and opportunities for more dental providers to be educated and offer services to Medicaid patients. (p.23)
 - b. Increase Medicaid reimbursement rates so that more Virginia dentists will accept Medicaid insured patients. (p.23)

Economic Opportunity

Budgetary

- Through Budgetary action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans and the Department of Labor to study employment and educational history of New Americans to determine focus of career pathway programs, and New American capacity to fill employment gaps in the state. (p.25)
- Through Budgetary action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans, the Department of Labor, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, and the Department of Education to explore further opportunities to recruit New American talent and retain them through statewide employment initiatives. (p.25)
- Through Budgetary action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans and the Department of Labor to review licensing and certification criteria and develop, translate, and disseminate career pathway

maps. (p.26)

Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs

Administrative

- ONA should highlight the existing U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) Citizenship Resource Material on the ONA website and in any other related state agency websites or materials. (p.30)
- ONA should explore working directly with the USCIS Office of Citizenship and Applicant Information Services to use their resources, and/or develop other resources specific to Virginia, to promote naturalization at community events, meetings, etc. (p.30)

Budgetary & Legislative

- Through Budgetary Action, provide funding to the Office of New Americans to develop programs that will promote naturalization, highlight, and utilize existing USCIS Office of Citizenship Resources and Application Services, and provide technical support to those applying for citizenship. (p.30)
- The Office of New American Advisory Board recommends that the Virginia Governor empower the Office of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion to create and provide oversight of a state language access plan, in partnership with the Office of New Americans and the Office of New Americans Advisory Board, that would provide guidance and expectations for agency and department language access plans throughout the government of Virginia. The state language access plan would also include procurement policies and review of Code for provisions that would limit or restrain the implementation of a state language access plan. This would then be accompanied by legislative action for compliance provisions.(p.30)
- The Office of New American Advisory Board recommends that adequate funding be provided to fully staff the Office of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion to oversee the compliance of agencies and departments within the state language access plan. The ODOI would also be tasked with the periodic review of the state language access plan for compliance with federal guidelines and current best practices. (p.31)

GENERAL BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Budgetary

- Enhance the Office of New Americans budget to address expanded and unmet needs. (p. 41)

Legislative

- Amend the Code to allow for more meetings per year. (p. 38)
- Amend the Code to raise the number of appointed non legislative citizen Board members to twenty-one.(p. 38)
- Amend the Code to include additional ex-officio members to the Board. (p. 38)
- Amend the Code governing Freedom of Information Act to allow all subcommittee meetings to be electronic as defined by Code §2.2-2100. (p. 39)
- Commission a new JLARC study to assess the integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth and update the findings from the 2004 report. (p. 41)
- Enhance the Office of New Americans budget to address expanded and unmet needs. (p. 41)

CONCLUSION

The Office of New Americans Advisory Board wishes to thank Governor Glenn Youngkin, the Office of the Governor, our General Assembly members, the Cabinet Secretaries and their offices, the many agencies within the Administration, Chief Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion Officer Martin Brown, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services Dr. Danny TK Avula, Director of the Office of New Americans Seyoum Berhe, Senior Program Consultant Louise Pocock and DSS and ONA leadership and staff for their support of the Board. We would also like to recognize the administration's focus on the integration of New Americans as valuable contributors to the Commonwealth.

The Board has embraced this vision of a more welcoming and inclusive Commonwealth and is dedicated to the development of an agency and system that will address the multifaceted needs and opportunities confronted by and presented through these newcomers. We continue to emphasize that these individuals and communities present an incredible opportunity for innovation, global competitiveness and positive economic impacts for Virginia and the nation.

We look forward to leveraging our experience, knowledge, networks, and connectivity to the aspiring and New American communities to make Virginia a recognized leader in opportunity and inclusivity.

Appendices of 2023 Annual Report

Additional documents referenced in the report are listed below and attached to the end of this report.

Appendix A - Ensuring Access to Dental Care, Dr. Fern Hauck, ONAAB member

Appendix B - Statement about state language access plan

REFERENCE LIST

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- Center for Disease Control and Prevention, [What Is Health Literacy?](#)
- Department of Medical Assistance Services, [A Review of Medicaid and FAMIS Dental Benefits to Determine Any Issues Related to Access](#)
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- Michigan Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, [An Online Resource for Skilled Immigrant](#)
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- Office of New Americans Advisory Board 2021-2022 Report, October 2022, Table 17.
- Open Doors, [2021 Fast Facts: International Students](#)
- Population Estimates (2022), [Lawful Permanent Resident \(LPR\) PE \(dhs.gov\), Tables 4 and A3, Office of Immigration Statistics](#)

Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative, [Integration Outcomes for Forcibly Displaced Persons](#)

Rich, A. (2021) [New Americans in Virginia - An overview of immigrants' contributions to the commonwealth, New American Economy](#)

Ruiz, N. G. (2014) [The Geography of Foreign Students in U.S. Higher Education: Origins and Destinations, Brookings Institute](#)

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[Virginia Career Works](#)

Virginia Department of Education, Mandatory Cultural Competency Training and Licensure Requirements

Virginia Department of Education, [VDOE Staffing and Vacancy Report](#)

Virginia Department of Education, [Laboratory Schools Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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Addendum: Ensuring Access to Dental Services for all Medicaid-eligible Virginians

Author: Dr. Fern Hauck, Office of New American Advisory Board

Oral health is linked to overall health and needs to be expanded to all groups of people. Prior to Medicaid expansion, children and pregnant individuals were the only Medicaid groups with dental coverage. This lack of coverage came at a cost to Virginians. Lack of dental care led to costly emergency department visits: of the 16,000 Virginia Medicaid recipients that visited emergency rooms in 2018, more than half were treated for “non-traumatic dental conditions” like tooth aches and loose teeth. In addition, Virginia spent \$3.31 million on 12,617 visits to the ED for dental-related pain and infection. There are also racial disparities in dental care access and oral health outcomes. A recent study showed that 71% of black adults in Virginia (45-64 years) report losing at least one tooth to infection in comparison only 49.7% of white adults. (Source: Department of Medical Assistance Services, Virginia Oral Health Report Card - Companion Narrative 2016)

Over the past year, Committee member Dr. Fern Hauck has been in touch with various experts in the Commonwealth to gather more data about dental coverage, benefits under Medicaid, number of patients enrolled, number of dentists enrolled and accepting patients, etc. These individuals included:

- Freddy Mejia, MSW, Deputy Director of Policy, The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis
- Ben Barber, Policy Director and Natisha Knight, Vice President of Community Engagement and Advocacy, Virginia Health Catalyst
- Dr. Zachary Hairston, Dental Consultant and Justin Gist, Dental Program Manager, Department of Medical Assistance Services

Below is a summary of the key findings from these meetings as well as relevant reports:

- DentaQuest is a large dental insurance provider in Virginia and across the U.S. Medicaid contracts with them and they run the Smiles for Children program, which currently includes Medicaid covered children, pregnant persons, and adults (name change expected this year). [Virginia Dental Providers \(dentaquest.com\)](https://www.dentaquest.com) contains extensive information about benefits. Virginia has 6 managed care organizations for Medicaid. DentaQuest is the single administrator for dental benefits, billed as fee for service.
- A [budget amendment](#) from 2022 increased Medicaid reimbursement for dental services in Virginia by 30% starting in July 2022. This amendment provides \$40.5 million from the general fund and \$76.5 million from nongeneral funds the first year and \$37.0 million from the general fund and \$67.3 million from nongeneral funds the second year to increase the five percent dental rate increase included in the introduced budget to 30 percent. This amendment accelerates the dental rate increase to July 1, 2022.
- This increase was a push to have more dentists accept Medicaid.
- As of 2022 1,782 dentists accepted Medicaid patients but 11.5% of those did not serve a patient with Medicaid. Just because one accepts Medicaid doesn't mean they have to treat.
- Note: There were 5394 dentists in VA in 2019 per National Library of Medicine.

- The current percentage Medicaid/FAMIS reimbursement rates as compared with commercial insurance fees are approximately 82%-83%, although some estimates are closer to 70%.
- Interpreter services are available through DentaQuest, as outlined in their manual. Dentists need to schedule an interpreter and then submit a claim for reimbursement. They can select from a list of approved interpreters or use another source. The claim process requires a large amount of paperwork.
- An excellent source of dental services provided can be found on this website [Dental | DMAS - Department of Medical Assistance Services \(virginia.gov\)](https://www.dmas.virginia.gov) and are summarized in the following table:

CHILDREN	PREGNANT MEMBERS	ADULTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular dental checkups • X-rays • Cleaning and fluoride • Sealants • Space maintainers • Braces • Anesthesia • Extractions • Root canal treatment • Crowns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X-rays • Exams • Cleanings • Fillings • Root canals • Gum related treatment • Crowns • Partials and Dentures • Extractions and other oral surgeries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X-rays • Exams • Cleanings • Fillings • Root canals • Gum related treatment • Dentures • Extractions and other oral surgeries

Important to note: Braces and bridges are not a covered benefit for adults and pregnant members.

Need a ride? Transportation services are available to Medicaid members for their dentist appointments. Visit the [Virginia Medicaid website](https://www.dmas.virginia.gov) or [contact your health plan](#) for contact information to make a reservation.

- DMAS released a comprehensive report in November 2022: “A Review of Medicaid and FAMIS Dental Benefits to Determine Any Issues Related to Access. A Report to the Virginia General Assembly and the Director of the Department of Planning and Budget.” <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2022/RD730/PDF>
- Highlights of the report:
 - 1782 dentists participated in FY2022 down from high of 1929 in FY 2018
 - NOVA highest number, SW lowest.
 - 2.06 million Medicaid recipients have comprehensive dental benefits as of Aug 2022.
 - 48.6% of children with Medicaid/FAMIS participated in dental services in 2022, most among Hispanic and lowest among Black children.
 - 15.6% of pregnant recipients received dental services in 2022.
 - 16.8% of Medicaid adults (165,000) received dental services in 2022 (but comprehensive services only began in 2021).

- o Other reasons dentists are less willing to treat adults may include:
 - o More complex problems than for children
 - o Lower reimbursement rates—this has been addressed by recent increase but dentists surveyed said more frequent rate analyses need to be done to keep up with inflation and commercial insurance
 - o COVID-related issues—staffing, increased cleaning requirements
 - o Benefit limitations
 - o Broken appointments
- Access issues related to:
 - o Not enough dentists participating in the program who are actively treating Medicaid patients
 - o VCU School of Dentistry noted an increase in adult patients and their willingness to serve them, but they have long wait times and strained resources
 - o Groups with particular difficulty in getting dental care:
 - People with disabilities. Often need general anesthesia even for preventive care, requiring an OR or outpatient surgical facility with anesthesia services
 - Residents in nursing facilities who are frail, require transportation assistance and often need to be accompanied by an aide; recommended on-site dental facility
 - Residents of rural areas, e.g. Southwest Va.
- In response to the findings of the study, DMAS plans to take the following actions:
 - 1) DMAS, in conjunction with stakeholders will develop and implement a statewide recruitment campaign to increase the number of actively participating dentists treating Medicaid/FAMIS members. The campaign will incorporate specific strategies to address the most underserved areas and populations, provider hesitation, as well as those dental specialties with the greatest need, for more actively participating dentists.
 - 2) DMAS will work with its contracted Dental Benefits Administrator to conduct a thorough review of the status of the dental network every two years. The review will focus on the number of actively participating dentists treating Medicaid/FAMIS patients statewide by region, and type of dental specialty. For each review, DMAS will make the report findings available online by October 1 beginning in 2024 and on a biennial basis thereafter.
 - 3) DMAS will analyze dental fees every three years in order to calculate what rate increases and additional funding is needed to at least maintain the current percentage of Medicaid/FAMIS rates as compared with commercial insurance fees (approximately 82%-83%).

4) DMAS will begin tracking and reporting the number of dental providers who are actively participating (i.e., treating Medicaid/FAMIS patients). This will be in addition to the number of overall providers contracted with the program

5) DMAS will work with the Department’s Dental Advisory Committee, the dental provider community, and DBA to identify specific actions that can be taken to reduce broken appointments. DMAS also will work with its non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) broker, the MCOs and other stakeholders to find ways for improving transportation to dental appointments.

DMAS has also launched a Forum on Language & Disability Access. This forum will provide an opportunity for community stakeholders and state agencies to discuss best practices for providing language assistance services. This forum will also provide an opportunity to discuss how these practices have increased access to services for individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities. The first was held in May 2023, and future forums will take place in August and December.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

In conclusion, there are many steps being taken in Virginia, led by DMAS, to improve dental care access to Medicaid recipients. However, there is limited information on access of immigrants and refugees to dental services, i.e., where are the newcomers located, and does that match the location of dentists who both register for Medicaid and actually see patients with Medicaid? For example, the following cities have the highest resettlement of Afghan parolees (who arrived in Fall, 2021):

Region/City	Number of Parolees	Dentists Taking Medicaid*
Northern Virginia Region	3,799	250
Richmond	793	5
Charlottesville	393	10
Newport News	260	4
Roanoke	220	2
Harrisonburg	176	2

*Source: Personal Communication, Justin Gist, Dental Program Manager, DMAS; July 2023.

However, as shown above, the number of dentists accepting Medicaid in these regions don’t align entirely with need.

For the next year, the A2S Committee is interested in obtaining more complete data on the location of dentists who accept Medicaid and who serve newcomers in relation to where Virginia’s newcomers are located, to assess current access and needs. As per the DMAS report, there are barriers to dentists accepting Medicaid, and it is highly likely that the complicated mechanism to secure and get reimbursed for interpreters is a strong barrier. We recommend

that additional surveying of dentists be done to specifically explore such potential barriers and to gain insights as to how these can be overcome. Continued dialogue with colleagues from DMAS is recommended and potential ways to collaborate on such a survey be explored.



January 17, 2023

Honorable Glenn Youngkin, Governor of Virginia and Jeff Goettman, Chief of Staff:

As Chairs of the New American Advisory Board (Kate Ayers-ONAAB), Virginia Asian Advisory Board (Suja Amir-VAAB), and the Virginia Latino Advisory Board (Lyons Sanchezconcha-VLAB), we are writing to highlight the importance that Virginia pursue and realize a statewide language access plan to address the needs of our growing foreign-born population. All three of our advisory boards prioritized the need for improved language services across state agencies in our most recent reports.¹ In addition, we recommend that this funding be allocated to the Office of Americans so that they can begin implementation of a statewide access plan, and that any unused funding be able to be carried over into the next fiscal year, maximizing the strategic use of the funds. We would like to highlight that this is not a request for additional money, and this would only require a net-zero transfer that will not accrue any cost to the Commonwealth.

Providing meaningful language access is a legally protected human right under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166 (2000),² and the current patchwork of language access policies is a significant barrier to new Virginians who need information translated for them to get accurate information, access public benefits, vote, and so much more. In addition, the ONAAB recently surveyed 159 stakeholders in the public and private sectors across the state and identified language access and the lack of sufficient and accessible English classes was one of the top barriers to integration.³ While communities who are new to the U.S. are still mastering the English language, resources and support systems across the state can ensure that everyone can have equal access to call Virginia their new home to live, work, and raise a family.

We are thankful that you worked with lawmakers last year to include \$2.5 million each year for FY23 and FY24 in the most recently approved budget to help meet the language access needs mentioned above. Unfortunately, these funds have not been appropriated to any state agency, and we believe that the Office of New Americans has the best strategy and expertise to create a unified pathway to improved language access across the Commonwealth. As such, we hope we

¹ [VLAB Report \(virginia.gov\)](#) [VAAB Report \(virginia.gov\)](#) [ONAAB Report \(virginia.gov\)](#)

² [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 | CRT | Department of Justice](#)

³ [Unmet Needs of New Virginians](#)

can count on our administration's support for budget amendment Item 485 #2s introduced by Senator Hashmi and we hope that the administration will work with budget leaders to move the \$5 million in General Fund resources to ONA by moving the funds from Central Appropriations to Secretary John Littel's secretariat. It is important to note that this is only a technical change and will not cost the state any additional resources.

Lyons, Suja, and I have reviewed the Office of New American's plan to utilize the 2.5 million in funding to launch a statewide language access plan. We agree that the following components are essential to effectively addressing the needs of new Virginians and maximizing their potential to be key economic drivers in a growing economy.

1. We need a statewide language access coordinator who can begin the work of researching and defining the best practices for implementing a language access plan.
2. We need to assess the current assets and gaps that already exist across state agencies and throughout the larger community.
3. We need to identify the most essential documents and information that needs to be translated into the top 10 languages spoken by our foreign-born residents.
4. We need to identify and increase the capacity of effective English Language Learning Programs to create stronger connections between English Language Learning programs and workforce development initiatives.

In short, our ask is two-fold: to move the existing language access funding to the Office of New Americans to create a statewide language access plan and carryforward the \$2.5M to FY23 and FY24 so it is available to spend after June 30, 2023. We are happy to meet and discuss in more detail about not allowing portions of the \$5 million allocated to expire and why we believe that the Office of New Americans has the expertise and centralized purpose to create, implement, and manage an ongoing language access plan for the state of Virginia. It is vital that they play this centralized role in providing ongoing support to state agencies as they work to develop and implement their own language access plans.

Sincerely,

Kate M. Ayers, Chair, Office of New Americans Advisory Board



Suja Amir, Chair, Virginia Asian Advisory Board



Lyons Sanchezconcha, Chair, Virginia Latino Advisory Board

