



## DEPARTMENT OF AUDITS AND ACCOUNTS

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December 28, 2016

The Honorable Steve Henson  
State Senator  
121-B State Capitol  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note  
Senate Bill (LC 41 0854)

Dear Senator Henson:

The bill would create the New Americans Program to identify and contact legal immigrants to facilitate their application for naturalization and inform them of the process involved to attain citizenship. The Department of Human Services (DHS) program would offer naturalization classes and assist legal immigrants in obtaining appropriate test and other exemptions in the naturalization process. As stated in the bill, the intent is that program assistance would enable such immigrants to attain citizenship within two years of meeting eligibility requirements.

As shown in **Exhibit 1**, the fiscal impact of the bill is dependent on the number of program participants, which is difficult to estimate. Based on costs of existing programs used to serve the refugee population, the number of immigrants with lawful permanent residence in Georgia, and potential program participation rates, we estimated costs of \$2.2 million to \$7.4 million associated with the bill. If interpreters are required, the range is \$2.7 million to \$8.7 million.

### Exhibit 1: Estimated Cost of New Americans Program

	<u>15% Participation</u>	<u>30% Participation</u>	<u>50% Participation</u>
Naturalization classes	\$1,560,000	\$3,120,000	\$5,200,000
Outreach program workshops	\$41,650	\$82,875	\$138,125
Board of Immigration appeals (BIA) staff	\$590,459	\$1,166,255	\$1,886,000
<u>Equipment and operating expenses<sup>(1)</sup></u>	<u>\$43,544</u>	<u>\$87,088</u>	<u>\$141,621</u>
<b>Total Without Interpreters</b>	<b>\$2,235,653</b>	<b>\$4,456,218</b>	<b>\$7,365,746</b>
Legal certified interpreter staff	\$383,864	\$671,762	\$1,151,595
Equipment and operating expenses <sup>(1)</sup>	\$43,544	\$78,077	\$132,652
<b>Total Costs With Interpreters</b>	<b>\$2,663,061</b>	<b>\$5,206,057</b>	<b>\$8,650,993</b>

(1) Depending on the number of staff, an additional \$27,920 to \$87,250 would be needed for furniture and telecommunications equipment in the first year.

The number of potential program participants are based on figures from the federal Office of Immigration Statistics. According to OIS, nearly 26,000 immigrants were granted lawful permanent residence in Georgia annually between 2011 and 2013, and approximately 17,000 annual naturalizations occurred in Georgia over the last 10 years. Given the ability of residents to gain citizenship without program assistance, as well as a typical five-year interval between the granting of permanent residency and naturalization, we are unable to accurately predict the number of potential participants. For those reasons, we provided a range potential program participation.

DHS stated that it would contract with private vendors and non-profit organizations to conduct outreach workshops and provide naturalization and forms assistance classes. DHS pays \$400 per attendee for the refugee classes currently conducted. DHS would also incur additional contracted costs for space and supplies affiliated with these workshops.

The estimates also include funding for core program personnel and interpreters. Core program staff would be responsible for operating the program, providing case management, coordination and oversight of vendors, outreach services, and naturalization services. At 50% program participation, DHS estimates that 13 Bureau of Immigration Appeals-certified staff (12 staff and supervisor) would be required. The 12 staff positions have a cost of \$143,000 per position, and the supervisor has a cost of \$158,000 (both amounts include salary and benefits). DHS staff also recommend the addition of 12 certified interpreters at a cost of approximately \$95,000 per position (salary and benefits). The number of positions would be proportionately lower for the 15% and 30% participation rates. DHS would also have equipment and operating expenses associated with new staff.

Any future changes to immigration policy could affect the number of persons obtaining lawful permanent resident status and seeking citizenship, consequently affecting future program costs.

Sincerely,



Greg S. Griffin  
State Auditor



Teresa A. MacCartney, Director  
Office of Planning and Budget