



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam



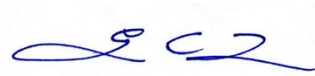
VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF
NEW AMERICANS
ADVISORY
BOARD

Annual Report 2020-2021

October 15, 2021

To: Honorable Ralph H. Northam, Governor
Honorable General Assembly Members

From: Eric Lin, Chair
Office of New Americans Advisory Board



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 and provide recommendations for improving state policies and programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of new Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

The past eighteen months have brought about significant change to the world, nation and Commonwealth. We have seen a global pandemic and economic crisis, a nationwide outcry for systemic changes to address criminal injustice, and a rise in anti-Asian hate. The communities in the Commonwealth felt the impacts of these events most keenly. Lives have been disrupted and the world continues to change around us.

We have also witnessed a humanitarian crisis with the United States withdrawal from Afghanistan. This war may have taken place on the other side of the world, but this abrupt culmination of an almost twenty year conflict has highlighted the challenges of refugees and immigrants in the United States and Commonwealth. The plight of the evacuees has shown the stark realities when people are forced to rebuild their lives, in a new country where they do not speak the language and face significant barriers.

It is with this understanding that the members of the Office of New Americans Advisory Board applaud the creation of the Office of New Americans and our Board. Through the Office and Board, the Commonwealth has the opportunity to work towards the effective integration of aspiring and new Americans by developing innovative and sound strategies to address the issues, needs and opportunities within these communities.

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

Even though the Board has just been recently appointed, and the work has just begun, we have identified several recommendations that we feel will help to create a robust Office of New Americans, and an effective Board to provide sound strategies for stronger and more effective support. We look forward to engaging further to establish more comprehensive connectivity to these communities, develop effective support that is accessible and equitable and align the localities, state and Federal resources to create a more Welcoming Commonwealth - A Commonwealth in which new and aspiring New Americans are respected, valued and supported.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of New Americans Advisory Board (ONAAB) 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.

The ONAAB is pleased to submit the first annual board report to the Honorable Ralph H. Northam 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 foreign-born population in the Commonwealth is estimated to be 1.084 million individuals or roughly 12.7% of the total state population. This fast-growing segment of Virginia's overall population ranks as the 10th largest aspiring and new American population in the nation.

The ONAAB held its first meeting in January of 2021 and the initial work was focused on the creation of a solid foundation with realistic goals. Therefore, the ONAAB has adopted the following **Guiding Principles** that provide an overarching focus regarding the work of the board.

- **Addressing the Narrative**
- **Ensuring Linguistic and Cultural Competencies**
- **Data Equity**
- **Championing Representation**

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.

- **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 supports 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 will impact the aspiring and New American communities in the Commonwealth.

The ONAAB also has taken the important step of defining "New Americans." The definition was not specified in the authorizing code therefore as it pertains to the work of the board:

New Americans refer to foreign-born persons residing in Virginia and their children, foreign and native born.

The ONAAB has not had the necessary time to begin the more in-depth work of the committees, however the board has been able to identify several recommendations that would enhance the work of the ONAAB and the Office of New Americans.

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 to 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.

ONAAB 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.
- Elevate the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion to Secretariat level.
- Position the Office of New Americans for better impact.
- Enhance the Office of New Americans budget to address expanded and unmet needs.
- Support the Office of New Americans through continued support from the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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2020-2021 OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS ADVISORY BOARD

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Eric Lin	Chair - <i>Chesterfield</i>
Hannah “Mel” Borja	Vice Chair - <i>Richmond</i>
Kate Ayers	Secretary - <i>Henrico</i>
El Hadji Djibril Niang	Treasurer & Interim Lead of Economic Opportunity Committee – <i>Richmond</i>

COMMITTEE & FOCUS LEADERSHIP

Dr. Ahoo Salem	Co-Lead, Ensuring Linguistic and Cultural Competencies Focus– <i>Roanoke</i>
Dr. Eva Stitt	Co-Lead, Ensuring Linguistic and Cultural Competencies Focus– <i>Norfolk</i>
Michael Hoefler	Lead, Data Equity Focus – <i>Alexandria</i>
Amelia Castaneda Smith	Lead, Access to Services Committee – <i>Richmond</i>
Dr. Jennifer Crewalk	Lead, Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs Committee– <i>Reston</i>

CURRENT MEMBERS

Dora Muhammad	Access to Services Committee– <i>Triangle</i>
Dr. Fern Hauck	Access to Services Committee– <i>Earlysville</i>
Hassan Ahmad	Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs Committee– <i>Sterling</i>
Juan Santacoloma	Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs Committee– <i>Chesterfield</i>
Dr. Milton Vickerman	Date Equity Focus and Economic Opportunity Committee– <i>Charlottesville</i>
Rammy Barbari	Economic Opportunity Committee – <i>Falls Church</i>
SoYoung Yoon	Access to Services Committee– <i>Manassas Park</i>
Susannah Lepley	Economic Opportunity Committee– <i>Rockingham</i>

FORMER MEMBERS

Amar Bhattarai	<i>Roanoke</i>
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EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Dr. Janice Underwood	Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer
May Nivar	Immediate Past Chair, Virginia Asian Advisory Board
Suja Amir	Interim Chair, Virginia Asian Advisory Board
Paul Berry	Chair, Virginia Latino Advisory Board
Dr. Cheryl Ivey Green	Chair, Virginia African American Advisory Board
Ashley Reynolds	Chair, Council on Women
Mona Siddiqui	Deputy Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer and Senior Policy Advisor, Office of New Americans

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:

- Implement a statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of new Americans in the Commonwealth.
- 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- Serve as the primary liaison with external stakeholders, particularly immigrant-serving and refugee-serving organizations and businesses, on immigrant integration priorities and policies;
- 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;
- Manage competitive grant programs that replicate beneficial practices or test new innovations that improve the effectiveness and efficacy of immigrant integration strategies; and
- 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 eighteen nonlegislative 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, Equity and Inclusion for the Commonwealth and the Chairmen 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 nonvoting privileges. Nonlegislative 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:

Addressing the Narrative - 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 Equity - It is impossible to address inequities and disparities without the data to identify issues, understand disparities, and advocate for policy change. Data collection must be modernized to properly reflect today's Commonwealth and its makeup of race, ethnicity, national origin, and other identifiers.

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 diversity, equity and 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 aspiring and new American 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
- Exploring opportunities to provide basic services to all newcomer communities, despite immigration status (healthcare, food access, etc...)

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

- Exploring cultural and linguistic barriers and how they affect the integration of new Americans into the economy

Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs Committee - This Committee will explore the interconnectivity of governmental policy and changes to those policies that will impact the aspiring and New American 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
- Identifying grant opportunities to support necessary programs and initiatives

NEW AMERICANS IN THE COMMONWEALTH: CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS



New Americans are *foreign-born persons and their children, foreign or native-born, residing in Virginia.*

Most charts in this report, however, exclude native-born children and only refer to New Americans who are *foreign-born*, or those living in Virginia or the United States who were born outside of the country.

POPULATION CHANGE

Virginia's total population more than doubled between 1960 (4.0 million) and 2019 (8.5 million), while the number of foreign-born persons in Virginia increased twenty-two times over the same period.

1 in every 8 residents in Virginia is foreign-born.



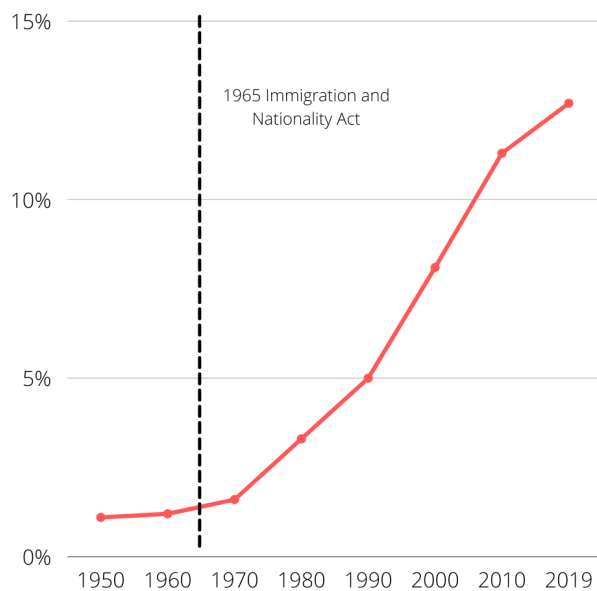
Source: [Virginia State Data Profile](#), 2019 1-year ACS compiled by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). ¹

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 1.084 million in 2019, which is the latest data available. Overall, Virginia's foreign-born population increased from 1.8% to 12.7% between 1960 and 2019 (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 now has the 10th highest foreign-born population. Virginia's percent foreign-born increased from 1.2 percent in 1960 to 12.7 percent in 2019 (see figure 2). The percent foreign-born in the United States increased from 5.4 percent to 13.7 percent over the same period.

Figure 1.

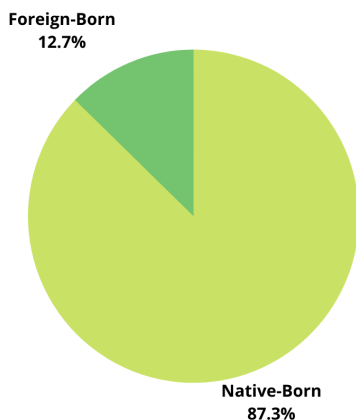
Virginia Foreign-Born Population Percentage (1950-2019)



Sources: [Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 2000²](#), Working Paper Number POP-WP081; [The Foreign-Born Population in the U.S.³](#), U.S. Census Bureau, May 2012; [Virginia State Data Profile, 2019 1-year ACS compiled by the Migration Policy Institute \(MPI\)](#).

Figure 2.

Comparison of Native-Born & Foreign-Born Population in Virginia (2019)

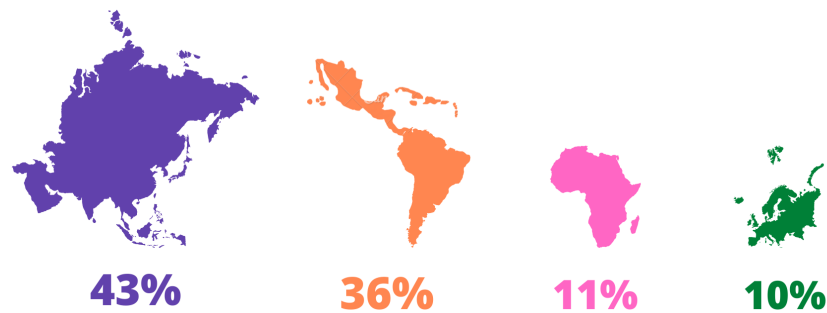


Source: [Virginia State Data Profile, 2019 1-year ACS compiled by the Migration Policy Institute \(MPI\)](#).

REGION AND COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Figure 3.

Virginia Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth (2019)



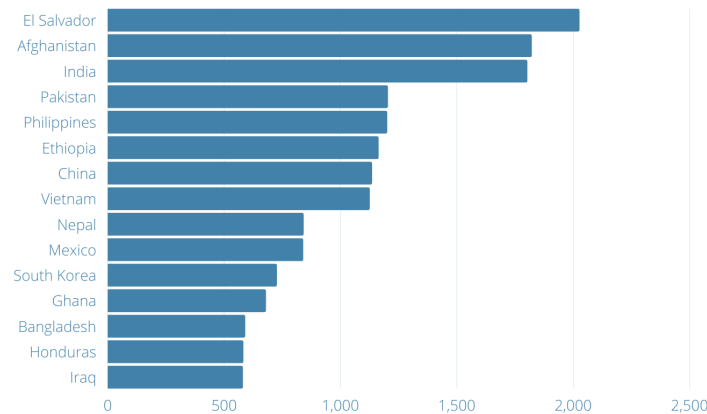
Source: [Virginia State Data Profile](#), 2019 1-year ACS compiled by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI).

In 2019 most foreign-born originated in Asia (43 percent) and 36 percent came from Latin America (South American, Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean) (see figure 3). Eleven percent were born in Africa and 10 percent in Europe.

Figure 4 shows the 15 leading countries of birth for recent legal immigrants intending to reside in Virginia.

Figure 4.

Average Annual Number of Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) intending to Reside in Virginia by 15 Leading Countries of Birth (2015-2019)



Source: Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, [Lawful Permanent Resident Data Tables 2015-19, Supplemental Table 1⁴](#).

Over 41 percent of Virginia's recent immigrants with legal status, specifically lawful permanent residents (otherwise known as "green card holders") in Fiscal Years 2015-19 were born in eight countries. The leading countries were: El Salvador (7.3%), Afghanistan (6.6), and India (6.5), followed by Pakistan (4.3), the Philippines (4.3), Ethiopia (4.2), China (4.1), Vietnam (4.1), Nepal (3.0), and Mexico (3.0). Seven of the top ten countries were in Asia.

RACE

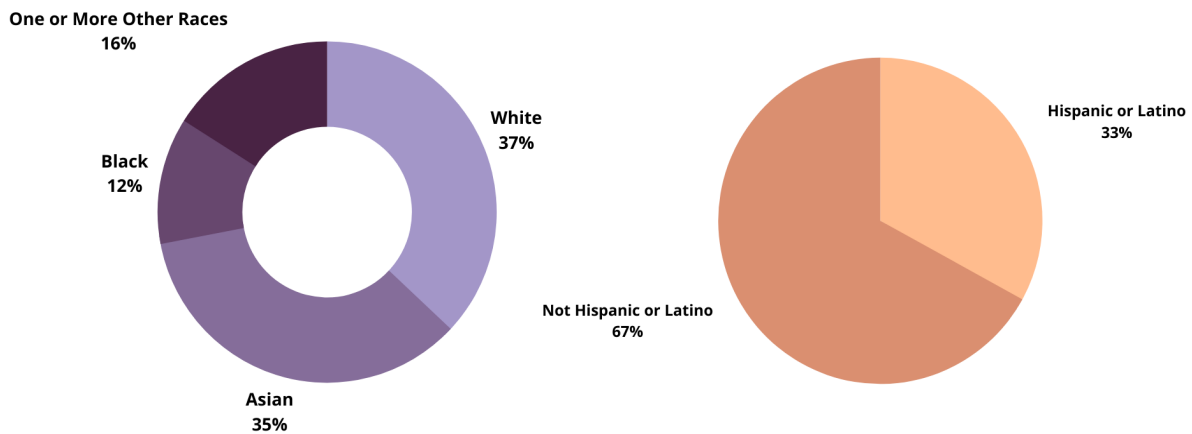
These data on region of origin dovetail with recent 2020 census results showing growth in Virginia’s Asian, Hispanic, and “some other race” categories, and a decline in the “white alone” category. The influx of new Americans likely impacted these changes in Virginia’s racial makeup, but these conclusions must be treated with caution. Having instituted new coding procedures, the Census Bureau has stated that 2020 census data on race are incompatible with previous years.

Specifically, these new coding procedures allow Americans to now choose to belong to multiple races, which has likely meant that some “white” Americans in 2010 now identify as some other race. The “white alone” category declined from 68.6 percent of the population in Virginia in 2010 to 60.3 percent. The state’s black population declined from 19.4 to 18.6 percent. Meanwhile, Virginia’s Hispanic population increased from 7.9 to 10.5 percent, its Asian population rose from 5.5 to 7.1 percent, its “some other race alone” category grew from 3.2 to 5.2 percent, and its “two or more races” category swelled from 2.9 to 8.2 percent.

Foreign-born Virginians in 2019 reported their race as white (37 percent), Asian (percent), black (percent), or one or more other races (16 percent). Nearly 33 percent of the foreign born reported that they were Hispanic or Latino (see figure 5.)

Figure 5.

Virginia's Foreign Born Population by Race/Ethnicity (2019)



Source: [Virginia State Data Profile](#), 2019 1-year ACS compiled by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI).

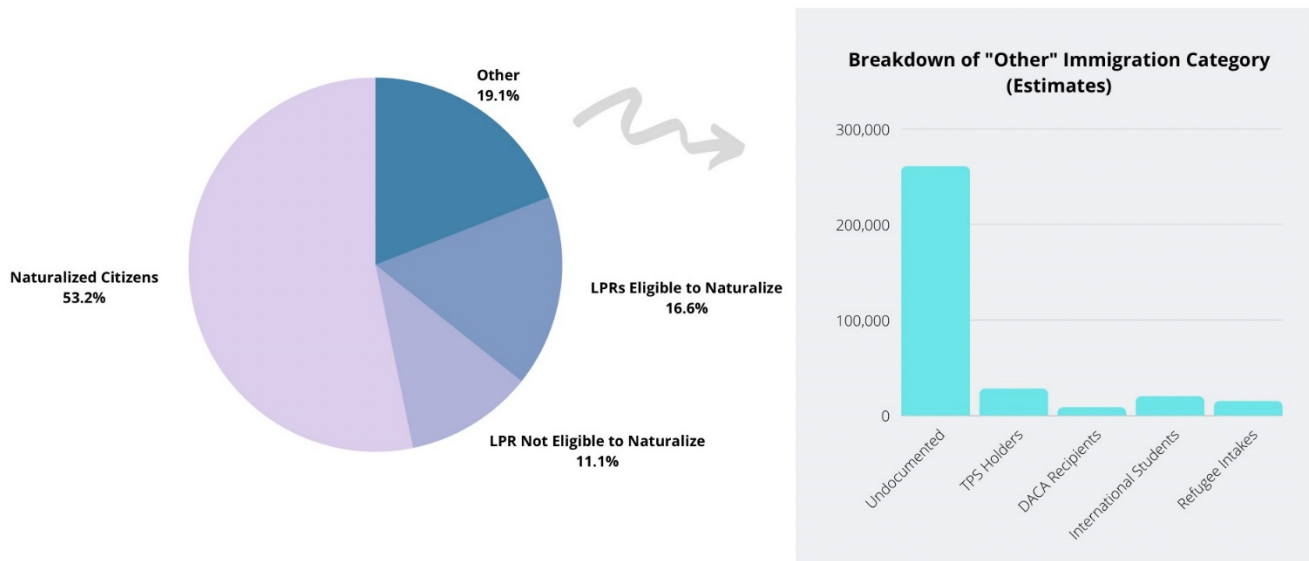
ESTIMATED LEGAL STATUS AND CATEGORY OF IMMIGRATION

Virginia’s foreign-born population was 1,084,000 according to the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS). About 577,000 (or 53.2 percent) of the foreign-born reported that they were U.S. citizens through naturalization (see figure 6).

The remaining 507,000 persons are not U.S. citizens, and their exact immigration status is unknown as it is not collected in federal surveys. These non-citizens could be lawful permanent residents (LPR or green-card holders), temporary visitors, refugees or asylees, international students, or unauthorized residents. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) estimates that Virginia has 300,000 LPRs, of which 180,000 are eligible to naturalize.

Figure 6.

Virginia's Foreign Born Population: Estimated Immigration Categories of 1,084,000 Residents (2019)



Sources: ACS, [Virginia State Data Profile](#), 2019 1-year ACS compiled by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI); LPRs eligible or not eligible to naturalize, [Estimates of the Lawful Permanent Resident Population in the United States and the Subpopulation Eligible to Naturalize: 2015-2019⁵](#), Department of Homeland Security; Undocumented Population, [State-Level Unauthorized Population and Eligible to Naturalize Estimates⁶](#), Center for Migration Studies; Temporary Protected Status, [US Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\) I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status, Approvals by Beneficiary State as of November 29, 2018⁷](#); DACA, [Count of Active DACA Recipients By State or Territory, As of June 30, 2021⁸](#), US Citizenship and Immigration Services; International Students, [Virginia 2020 Fact Sheet⁹](#), Open Doors, Institute for International Education; VA Refugee Admissions, [Virginia Refugee Statistics¹⁰](#), Virginia Office of New Americans.

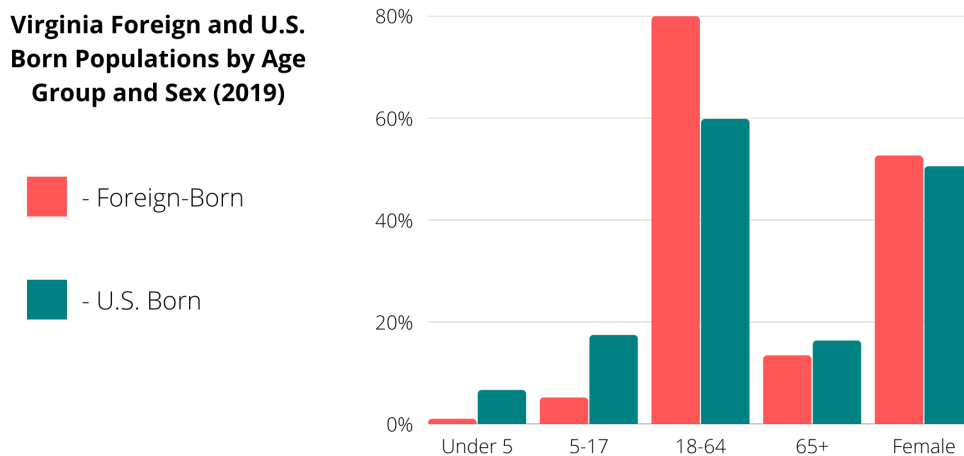
Among the “other” population, the Center for Migration Studies estimates that there were 261,000 unauthorized residents in Virginia as of 2019. This number is higher than the other category, but this result could be due to their underreporting in the American Community Survey (ACS). Additionally, DHS reports there are 28,000 persons with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) (as of November 2018) and 8,500 approved for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) (as of June 2021). According to the Virginia Newcomer Information System, 15,000

newcomers processed through its intake to apply for services from October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2020. Finally, there were about 20,000 international students in 2020 according to the Institute of International Education.

AGE AND SEX

Foreign-born persons residing in Virginia are older (43.4 years old) than native born persons (37.2) and are slightly more likely to be female (52.6 percent) compared to those born in the United States (50.5 percent) (see figure 7).

Figure 7.



Source: [Virginia State Data Profile](#), 2019 1-year ACS compiled by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI).

Only 6.7 percent of the foreign-born in Virginia are children under the age of 18. This figure understates the impact of immigration in the commonwealth because it excludes the native-born children of immigrants that we consider to be “New Americans.” About 319,000 native-born children live in Virginia immigrant households in 2019 (Tabulation of 2019 ACS 5-year provided by Institute for Immigration Research, George Mason University).

About
319,000
 native-born children
 lived in Virginia immigrant households in 2019.



Using this figure, the percentage of New Americans who are under 18 increases to 28 percent. New Americans account for 21 percent of Virginia residents under 18 years old. The impact of recent immigration on the school-age population and additions to the labor force is more evident when including all the children in immigrant households.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Virginia’s foreign-born residents are highly concentrated in Northern Virginia. Nearly 70 percent of the foreign-born live in Northern Virginia. Other leading regions are Central (11.7 percent) and Hampton Roads (10.8).

Virginia Foreign-born and Total Population by Region: 2019 (5-year ACS)				
Region	Foreign-born Population	Total Population	Percent Foreign born	Foreign born % in Region
Northern	730,689	3,005,894	24.3%	69.5%
Central	123,377	1,582,157	7.8%	11.7%
Hampton Roads	113,884	1,693,763	6.7%	10.8%
West Central	32,871	757,150	4.3%	3.1%
Valley	30,320	500,093	6.1%	2.9%
Southside	10,096	409,948	2.5%	1.0%
Eastern	5,210	122,822	4.2%	0.5%
Southwest	5,112	382,636	1.3%	0.5%
Virginia, State Total	1,051,559	8,454,463	12.4%	100.0%

Source: Institute for Immigration Research (IIR), George Mason University, Special tabulation from 2019 American Community Survey (5-year). Note that VA population totals are lower than reported elsewhere as this tabulation is based on the 2019 5-year pooled ACS rather than the 2019 1-year ACS.

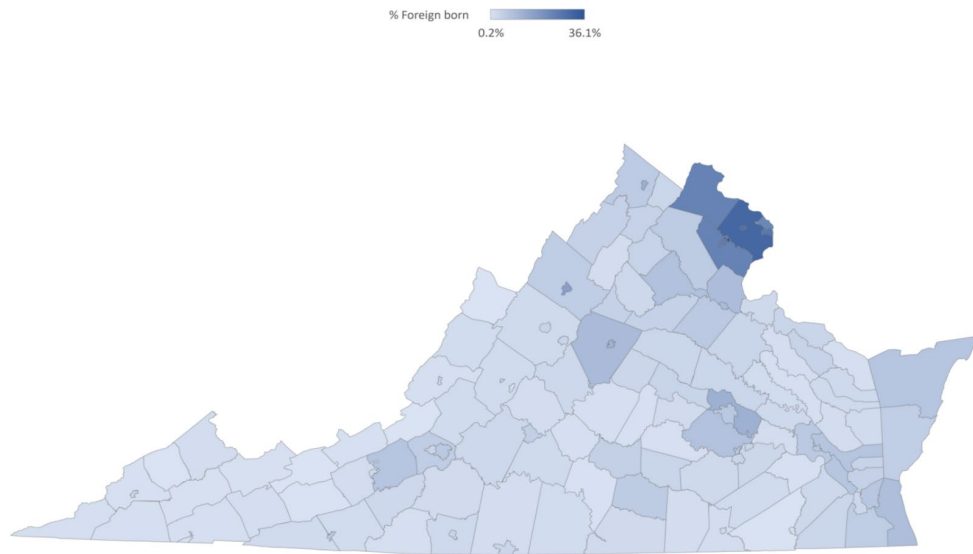


Source: [Regions](#) defined by University of Virginia, Weldon-Cooper Center for Public Service¹¹

While 1 in 8 Virginia Residents are foreign-born, the comparable figure for Northern Virginia is 1 in 4. See Figure 8 for the percent foreign-born for all Virginia counties and independent cities. The geographic areas with the largest percent foreign-born are Manassas Park City (36.1 percent), Fairfax County (31.3), Fairfax City (28.9), Alexandria City (27.2), Manassas City (26.2) Loudoun County (24.5), Prince William County (24.5) and Arlington County (23.2).

Figure 8.

Percent Foreign-born by Virginia County: 2019



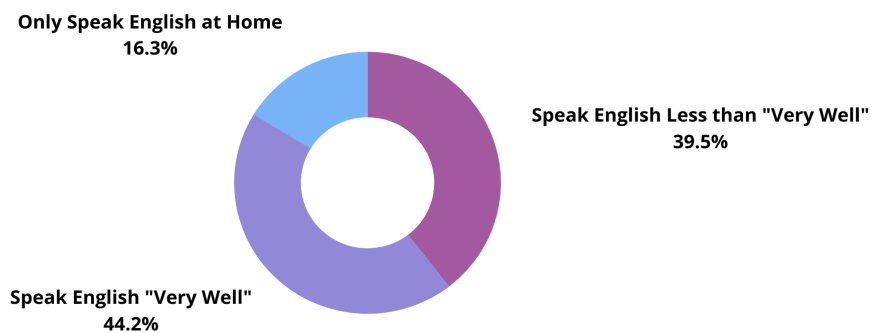
Source: Institute for Immigration Research (IIR), George Mason University, Special tabulation from 2019 American Community Survey (5-year).

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Nearly 40 percent of Virginia’s foreign-born residents are Limited English Proficient (LEP) (see figure 9). More than 16 percent report only speaking English at home and more than 44 percent state that they speak English “very well.” Nearly 53 percent of non-citizens are LEP, while even 28 percent of naturalized citizens are LEP.

Figure 9.

English Proficiency of Virginia Foreign Born Population (age 5 and older, 2019)

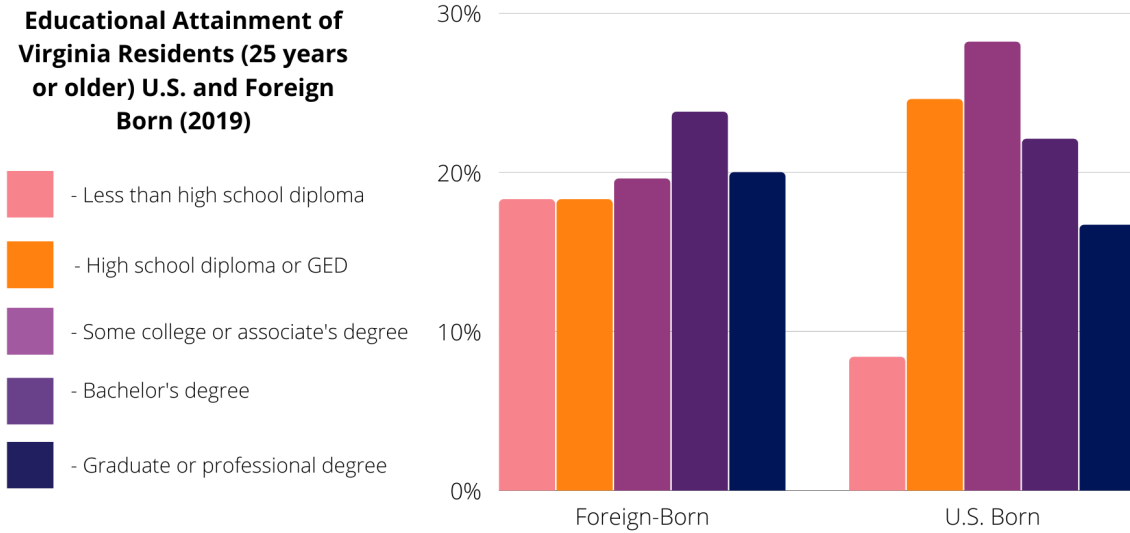


Source: [Virginia State Data Profile](#), 2019 1-year ACS compiled by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). Limited to those 5 years or older.

EDUCATION

Immigrants in Virginia exhibit a bifurcated educational pattern, with 44 percent sporting a college degree but 18 percent failed to finish high school (see figure 10). About 39 percent of Virginia’s native-born population has a college degree, while only 8 percent lack at least a high school degree.

Figure 10.



Source: [Virginia State Data Profile](#), 2019 1-year ACS compiled by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI).

LABOR FORCE AND BUSINESS

The following statistics and estimates were compiled primarily from the American Community Survey and reported by the New American Economy (2019) and American Immigration Council (2018).

In 2019, Virginia's immigrant households paid



4.1 billion

in state and local taxes



9.4 billion

in federal taxes

Source: *The New American Economy*, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/virginia/>, 2019¹²

In 2018, Virginia's undocumented immigrants paid



260.5 million
in state and local taxes



441.3 million
in federal taxes

Source: American Immigration Council, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-virginia>¹³, 2018



1.7 billion

revenue generated by 84,943 immigrant entrepreneurs in Virginia in 2018.

Source: American Immigration Council, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-virginia>¹⁴, 2018

The New American Economy reports that, as of 2019, immigrant households in Virginia had \$47.1 billion in income, paid \$4.1 billion in state and local income taxes, and paid \$9.4 billion in federal taxes. As well, the American Immigration Council reports that undocumented immigrants in Virginia paid an estimated \$441.3 million in federal taxes and \$260.5 million in state and local taxes in 2018.

According to the same American Immigration Council report, 703,057 immigrant workers make up 17 percent of Virginia's workforce. This workforce is composed of both service-based and professional fields. New American Economy reported that 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 are 22.8% of STEM workers in Virginia. Virginia's healthcare industries by share of foreign-born workers were as follows: physicians and surgeons (29.4%), health aides (18.7%), and nurses (14.0%).

BOARD ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH 2020-2021

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. The Board held the following general meetings:

- January 6, 2021 – Virtual (operating under State of Emergency due to Covid-19)
- April 7, 2021 – Virtual (operating under State of Emergency due to Covid-19)
- July 7, 2021 – Richmond
- October 6, 2021 – 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.

- Ashley Reynolds – Chair, Virginia Council on Women
- Cheryl Ivey Green – Chair, Virginia African American Advisory Board
- Courtney Dozier – Policy Director, Office of the Governor
- Emma Ito – Education & Programs Specialist, Library of Virginia
- Dr. Janice Underwood – Chief Officer, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- May Nivar – Chair, Virginia Asian Advisory Board
- Mona Siddiqui – Deputy Chief Officer, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Paul Berry – Chair, Virginia Latino Advisory Board
- Rich Andre – Senior Policy Coordinator, New American Economy
- S. Duke Storen – Commissioner, Department of Social Services
- Seon Rockwell – Senior Manager, Deloitte

BOARD MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

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

- Participation in the Virginia Covid-19 Vaccine Outreach Task Force 2020
- Participation in Senate District 10 Covid-19 Town Hall. January 2021
- Participation in the Virginia Language Access Conference April 2021
- Celebrating Immigrant Heritage Month 2021 by assisting the Office of the Governor with drafting of Press Release and Proclamation. June 2021
- Virtual Panel event with Secretary of the Commonwealth Kelly Thomasson, Deputy Chief Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mona Siddiqui for Immigrant Heritage Month, and Director of the Office of New Americans Seyoum Berhe. Board members Hassan Ahmad, Dora Muhammad, Juan Santacoloma and Eric Lin served as panelists. June 2021
- Eric Lin delivered opening remarks at the Roanoke Language Access Conference. September 2021
- Assisted Deputy Chief Director, ODEI Mona Siddiqui in addressing Legal Permanent Resident Supports during Afghan Evacuee engagement and processing. August-Sept 2021
- Participation in Improving Participation of Refugees in VA Workforce Workgroup.
- Participation in a roundtable regarding Afghan resettlement in Virginia with Senator Kaine, September 2021

OUTREACH

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

- Angela Chiang – Vice President, OCA Asian Pacific American Advocates – Central Virginia Chapter
- Bing Goei – Former Executive Director of Global Michigan (Formerly Michigan Office of New Americans)
- Cecil Fong – Houston Office of New Americans Advisory Board
- Dr. Danny Avula – Virginia State Covid-19 Vaccination Coordinator
- Ghazala Hashmi – Senator, General Assembly – District 10
- Kathy Tran – Delegate, General Assembly – District 42
- Kathryn Dolan – Director Business Development and Outreach Services – Virginia Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity
- Laura Goren – Research Director, The Commonwealth Institute
- Lisa Ramirez – Senior Vice President Community Impact, YMCA of Greater Richmond
- Mabel Menard – Chicago Office of New Americans Advisory Board
- Michel Zajur – President and CEO, Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Monica Smith-Callahan – Deputy County Manager Community Outreach Henrico County
- Seyoum Berhe – Director, Office of New Americans
- Tricia Puryear - Vice President of Social Responsibility and Strategic Partnerships, YMCA of Greater Richmond

BOARD REPORT

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS ADVISORY BOARD – GETTING STARTED

As noted previously, the Board had its inaugural meeting on January 6, 2021. The initial Board engagement and onboarding was conducted under the Covid-19 State of Emergency. With the ability to utilize online resources to conduct general meetings and Executive Committee meetings, the Board leadership was able to make significant strides in creating the initial structure for the work of the Board.

However, as a newly formed board, we faced some initial challenges that should be noted:

LACK OF INITIAL INFRASTRUCTURE, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Many of the individuals that have been appointed to the Board are not state employees nor have the experience of serving on previous appointed boards. Therefore, there is a gap in understanding on how our state government works as well as the functioning of its various secretariats and agencies. This compounded with the fact that this advisory board is newly created as is the office to which it is aligned, the initial work will be to build a solid foundation with realistic goals.

The initial work of Board leadership was to develop:

- Standard operating procedures for the Board
- Structure under our Guiding Principles and committee structure.

Leadership will continue its work towards the development of effective and Freedom of Information Act compliant policies and procedures. Fortunately, Board leadership has been able to work with our Deputy Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer and Senior Policy Advisor, Mona Siddiqui, and Legal Counsel from the Office of the Attorney General, Susan Whyte, and draw upon experience and information from other advisory boards to incorporate into the Board's policies and procedures.

It should also be noted that this advisory board is unlike the other established advisory boards, Virginia Asian Advisory Board, Virginia African American Advisory Board, Virginia Council on Women and the Virginia Latino Advisory Board in that this advisory board is supported by the Department of Social Services through the Office of New Americans and not through the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office. Additionally, this Board is tasked with support of a specific agency, the Office of New Americans. Also, according to code, our reports will be submitted to the Office of the Governor as well as the General Assembly.

DEVELOPMENT OF FOCUS

As the inaugural appointees, the Board has undertaken the important step to define "New Americans". The definition was not specified in the authorizing code, nor has the Office of New Americans provided specific guidance on the definition, therefore the Board has taken the initiative to further define this term. Through the guidance of our Data Equity team, and after review of institutional, current, and historical information and data, the Board has adopted the following definition of "New American."

New Americans refer to foreign-born persons residing in Virginia and their children, foreign and native born.

This allows the board to look at issues from the first and second generation aspiring and new American perspective. It is specifically relevant as we must consider the family unit as a whole. It is important to include the second generation as support, or lack of support, may impact future economic outlooks and contributions to the community. This definition is of critical importance as we look at the data available to address trends and gaps in access and usage of services and resources.

As appointees of the Board, our members have significant experience and expertise on the issues impacting immigrant and refugee communities. From the outset, there was a recognition that the needs of these communities encompass a broad variety of issues. These issues include: varying language proficiency, cultural appropriateness of services and resources, lack of disaggregated data, significant health disparities and access to medical supports; educational disconnects; opportunities for citizenship; access to safe affordable housing; transportation; behavioral health concerns; economic opportunities, shifting policy dynamics and more.

The Board and our Liaison, Grace Reynolds, spent considerable time polling and reviewing the thoughts of the members and ultimately, the Executive Committee and Board decided on a multi-level focus for the work of the Board. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of the issues and opportunities within these communities, the Board has adopted a structure that features several overarching guiding principles and a limited number of broader committees to address specific issue areas.

Guiding Principles

When considering the broad spectrum of issues and opportunities, it became apparent that there are several issues that transcend specific issues. These issues greatly impact the development and delivery of services and resources, gaps in those resources and ultimately access to those resources. These Guiding Principles are:

Addressing
the
Narrative

Ensuring Linguistic
and Cultural
Competency

Data Equity

Championing
Representation

Addressing the Narrative

In contrast to false narratives of New Americans as a dependency, threat, or liability, the Board believes that investment in New Americans communities is an investment in individuals and families who bring significant value to themselves and the Commonwealth. “Value” here is more than fiscal impact. It includes intangible and incalculable values, such as the inherent value of keeping families together, the value of cultural and linguistic enrichment, and the potential value of empowered, civically engaged future citizens. Determining fiscal impacts with precision is a difficult task due to the paucity of firm data, but the Board believes that fiscal impact is but one branch of the tree of prosperity, and that any policy for New Americans must take a holistic approach that includes value that defies reduction onto a balance sheet.

The United States was built upon such contributions - monetary and otherwise - of immigrants. However, our nation also has a long history of viewing newer immigrants as unwelcome while simultaneously exploiting their contributions. In the mid nineteenth century, millions of Irish and Germans migrated to the United States. These European migrants settled mainly on the East Coast. Soon thereafter, Chinese workers were recruited to work on

the transcontinental railroad, and they settled in the Western part of the country. By and large, these hyphenated Americans came with very few belongings or little savings and were viewed as undesirables. They also constituted a perceived threat to employment for Americans. This problematic narrative persists today in a more nuanced form.

Our modern world is a global one. Immigrants migrate to the United States for varying reasons. In fact, the United States has the largest immigrant population in the world with more than 44 million immigrants. These communities make up nearly 13% of the country's population and have settled in every state¹⁵. Despite this, New Americans have not found a fully inclusive and accepting society in America.

The 2016 *New Americans: Economic Demographic and Fiscal Effects of Immigration* study commissioned by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine established that immigrants are integral for U.S. economic growth and that they have little impact on wages and employment levels of the native-born. With regard to state and local governments, the National Academy found that,

*"In terms of fiscal impacts, first-generation immigrants are more costly to governments, mainly at the state and local levels, than are the native-born, in large part due to the costs of educating their children. However, as adults, the children of immigrants (the second generation) are among the strongest economic and fiscal contributors in the U.S. population, contributing more in taxes than either their parents or the rest of the native-born population."*¹⁶

The Office of New Americans Advisory Board firmly believes that state and local resources such as public school systems should be properly funded to meet the needs of foreign-born populations. Such fiscal support is truly an investment in not only New American families, but the Commonwealth as a whole. The Board remains committed to working with the Office of New Americans, the Office of the Governor, and the General Assembly to make such investments happen.

We must also recognize that immigrants and refugees constitute an important component of our workforce and economic prosperity. The National Academies report that *"In the coming years, immigration will be the primary source of labor force growth in an increasingly aging population"*¹⁷. As noted previously:

The New American Economy reports that, as of 2019, immigrant households in Virginia had \$47.1 billion in income, paid \$4.1 billion in state and local income taxes, and paid \$9.4 billion in federal taxes. As well, the American Immigration Council reports that undocumented immigrants in Virginia paid an estimated \$441.3 million in federal taxes and \$260.5 million in state and local taxes in 2018.

According to the same American Immigration Council report, 703,057 immigrant workers make up 17 percent of Virginia's workforce. This workforce is composed of both service-based and professional fields. New American Economy reported that 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 are 22.8% of STEM workers in Virginia. Virginia's healthcare industries by share of foreign-born workers were as follows: physicians and surgeons (29.4%), health aides (18.7%), and nurses (14.0%).

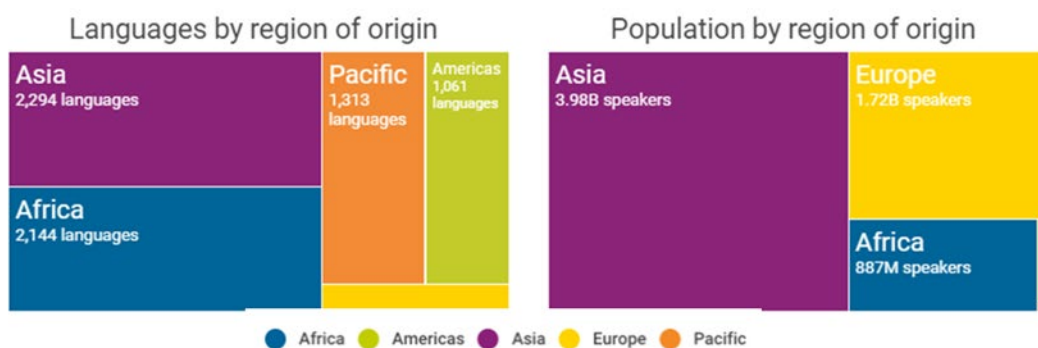
Instead of investing in New American communities, our current system spends billions on detention and deportation. According to another American Immigration Council report, "[s]ince the creation of DHS in 2003, ICE

spending has nearly tripled, from \$3.3 billion to \$8.3 billion today...Much of this funding has gone to increasing the agency’s ability to hold immigrants in detention in locations around the country,” and “since 2003, the budget of Customs and Border Patrol, which includes both the Border Patrol and operations at ports of entry, has also nearly tripled, rising from \$5.9 billion in FY 2003 to a high of \$17.7 billion in FY 2021.”¹⁸ This “enforcement-only” approach not only ignores but suppresses potential New American contribution. It is a lose-lose approach.

The Board submits that we must shift our perspective away from false narratives and embrace a clear vision on maximizing the benefits (cultural, economic, and potential) New Americans bring to Virginia and the nation.

Ensuring Linguistic and Cultural Competencies

According to the United States Department of State, there are 194 independent nations¹⁹ recognized by the United States. These are the points of origin of our New Americans today. With this many potential points of origin, the number of languages spoken around the world numbers around 7,000 distinct language varieties.²⁰



For each region of the world, this graphic compares the number of languages from a region (left) with how many people speak those languages (right). The population data isn't concerned with where people actually live, but rather, where their language comes from. So, for instance, an English-speaking man living in China would be categorized under Europe.

Source: <https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/continents-most-indigenous-languages>

As we noted earlier, there are roughly 1 million foreign born individuals in the Commonwealth. Northern Virginia is home to almost 70% of the foreign born population in the Commonwealth. Fairfax County Public Schools report that more than 200 languages are spoken at the homes of its students. In Henrico County in Central Virginia, students representing more than 100 countries, speak more than 80 languages and are English Language Learners. Similarly in Virginia Beach, more than 70 world languages are spoken in the homes of their students. This illustrates how diverse our immigrant and refugee populations truly are in the Commonwealth.

Along with this diverse New American population, comes the understanding that linguistic and cultural barriers impact practically every aspect of the New American experience.

The state does not currently have a state language access plan, and enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.²¹ has been the main measure of accountability with respect to language access. The need for an overall plan with consistent expectations and accountability measures is critical to addressing this very significant barrier to access.

To illustrate, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Virginia Employment Commission had a severe back log of unemployment claims.²² In many documented cases, those individuals with limited English proficiency had difficulty filing unemployment claims, or if they were successful, renewing when their claims were set to expire. This issue is not new but was exacerbated by the pandemic and ensuing economic struggles of all Virginians. While leadership understands and empathizes with the problem, the real consequence is that difficulties caused by language barriers make immigrants who are already struggling with economic difficulties feel a greater sense of loss. And the mounting barriers to these supports hurts immigrants more, engendering frustration and feelings of helplessness as they forgo receiving help and their rights.

Similarly, as noted in a report from ReEstablish Richmond²³, it was noted that individuals with limited English proficiency encountered significant barriers in obtaining driver's licenses and information to help these individuals become safer operators of motor vehicles. While the learner's permit exam is offered in 26 languages, the preparatory study materials are offered in English and sometimes Spanish. Per the report *"Exam translations alone are inadequate and inequitable without a means to prepare for the Exam. With the exception of the Driver's Manual in Spanish, even newcomers who primarily speak one of the 23 additional languages currently addressed by the Virginia DMV lack language access to DMV-provided resources to prepare for the translated Exam. This discrepancy seems incongruent for the government entity responsible for Virginia's road safety. Translated Exams should be supported by translated study materials. As well as providing meaningful access for English language learners, making the Driver's Manual and Online Practice Questions available in all the languages of the Exam would fulfill the very purpose of the test: to ensure that licensed drivers fully understand the rules and regulations of safely operating a motor vehicle in Virginia."*

In the past, other advisory board reports have highlighted language access and cultural competence barriers with access to ballots and voter registration (VAAB Report 2020), English Language Learner and family supports (VAAB Report 2020), small business supports (VAAB 2020); mental health supports (VAAB Report 2020); health language translation services (VLAB 2019-2020); Community Health Worker Program (VLAB 2019-2020); mental health access (VLAB 2019-2020) etc.

In acknowledgement of the wide scope of services provided by the state, we note that various agencies have addressed these language issues differently. It is our intent to address these disparate language access issues through a more comprehensive plan that takes into account the different challenges and potential solutions. This is a critical issue for our New American communities.

To that end, the Executive Committee has appointed two members of the Board to serve as our Board's Language Leads to specifically focus on the review of language access plans for state agencies and the barriers to the New American communities. These co-leads are Dr. Eva Stitt of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and Dr. Aho Salem, Executive Director of Blue Ridge Literacy. This specific focus will be supported by every member of the Board in their various topical focuses and committee work.

Other resources have been marshalled to address this issue as well, through budgetary action approved during this year's special legislative session. A Language Access Taskforce has been convened by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion *"to develop recommendations to implement a language access policy for Virginia state government to ensure equitable access to state services for Virginians with limited English proficiency. The Office shall consult with relevant state agencies, organizations serving immigrants and refugees in Virginia, and applicable Virginia Advisory Boards. In developing the recommendations, the Office shall identify current practices in Virginia state agencies, and best practices from other states and localities, assess applicable federal*

requirements, consider relevant data pertaining to Virginia's immigrant community, and identify a plan, including timeline, fiscal impact, and methods for making translated materials available to the public, that would be required for implementing a language access policy." This report is expected to be released in the latter part of 2021. It is our hope to review this report and incorporate and build upon it as one of our overall focuses.

Data Equity - It is impossible to address inequities and disparities without the data to identify issues, understand disparities, and advocate for policy change. Data collection must be modernized to properly reflect today's Commonwealth and its makeup of race, ethnicity, national origin, and other identifiers.

In an earlier section of this report, we noted several relevant data points that illustrate the importance of the new American communities to the Commonwealth. Notably:

- The foreign-born population numbers roughly 1,083,823 or 12.7% of the population
- Foreign born origination: Asia 42%, Latin American 36%, Africa 11%, Europe 9%, Other 2%
- Percentage of working age adults: Foreign Born 79.9%, US Born 59.8%
- 703,057 immigrant workers make up 17% of Virginia's workforce
- 84,943 immigrant entrepreneurs generated roughly 2 billion dollars in business revenue

This data was mostly compiled from US Census data and analyzed by the American Immigration Council and the New American Economy. But as we dig deeper into disparities and look for gaps in service, we are fully dependent on data from our agencies in the state. Good policy is based on good data, and if the agencies are not collecting the proper data, then it is very difficult to identify the issues, let alone address them.

An example of a failure to collect good racial and ethnicity data occurred with the collection of Covid-19 data during the late spring of 2020. During the early stages of the pandemic, data on infection rates, hospitalization rates and death rates did not include racial and ethnicity data breakouts for the Asian and LatinX/Hispanic communities. This was particularly damaging as it became apparent later that the LatinX/Hispanic community was disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. It wasn't until June 15, 2020, three months after the Governor's declared state of emergency, that it became clear through the data that although LatinX/Hispanic individuals constituted 10 percent of the state's population they accounted for 45 percent of the Covid-19 cases, 35 percent of the hospitalizations and 11 percent of the deaths, at that time.²⁴ This revelation led to increased information sharing in Spanish, additional outreach activities, and expanded testing in the LatinX/Hispanic communities in the Commonwealth. If the proper data was collected and reflected from the outset of reporting, the impacts could have been addressed sooner, with less loss of life.

As with our focus on language access and cultural competencies, the Executive Committee has appointed a lead to focus on the assessment of data collection and availability for meaningful disaggregation through our state agencies. Additionally, the data lead will review and highlight external sources of information that may support the work of the Board. Michael Hoefler, former Director of the Office of Immigration Statistics at the Department of Homeland Security, shall serve as the data lead for the Board.

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 diversity, equity and inclusion.

It is our intention to encourage policies that will engender more engagement between stakeholders and agencies of the Administration. At a minimum, we will highlight the opportunities presented in the more than 300 advisory

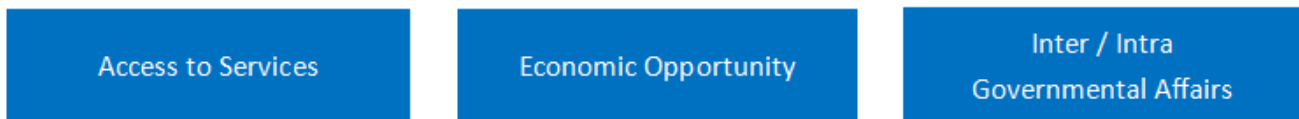
boards and commissions that serve the Commonwealth. Leadership will continue to work with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office to support the appointment of New American candidates to the more than 4,000 appointed positions available through these boards and commissions.

Additionally, the Board will encourage agencies to connect more directly with stakeholders through focus groups and town halls that the Board may assist in facilitating. These opportunities are easily created and executed and can be extremely effective in addressing the development and delivery of services to New Americans.

The Board also recognizes that including New Americans in the hiring and development process for state employment will assist in developing the insights and competencies that will be beneficial towards engagement with New Americans.

Committee Structure

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.



Access to Services

Regardless of immigration status, resettled newcomers from diverse backgrounds face similar barriers to community integration upon arrival. Many individuals and families who have fled conflict and crisis in their home countries come to the U.S. with few, if any, belongings. Many have limited or interrupted educational backgrounds as a result of experiencing displacement or because of conditions in their country of origin. Most resettled newcomers, even those with advanced degrees and years of professional experience, do not use English as a primary language and have a limited ability to understand, speak, read, or write English. These barriers, combined with cultural and systematic differences, make it very difficult for newcomers to understand and access American systems and services.

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 aspiring and new American 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
- Exploring opportunities to provide basic services to all newcomer communities, despite immigration status (healthcare, food access, etc...)

Access to Services Committee members:

- Amelia Castañeda Smith (committee lead)
- Kate Ayers
- Dr. Jennifer Crewalk
- Dr. Fern Hauck
- Dora Muhammad
- SoYoung Yoon

Economic Opportunity

Economic issues loom large for immigrants because those issues disproportionately motivate their decision to leave their countries. Even when other issues serve as proximate causes for migration – e.g., ethnic or political persecution – economic motives tend to remain important. The simple reason is that migrants move to better their lives and making a living is of paramount importance in this respect.

Taken, in part, from the New American Economy Report: When immigrants are allowed to work, billions of dollars are generated in income and consequently, millions of dollars are paid in taxes, and state and local governments are among the benefactors. In addition, millions are paid into Medicare and millions more are paid into Social Security allowing many Americans who thought that Social Security would run out to enjoy a comfortable retirement. One in six Virginia workers is an immigrant, making up a vital part of the state’s labor force. A total of 730,000 immigrant workers comprised 17 percent of the labor force.

As with other Virginians, our aspiring and 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 and lack of access to capital and corporate or business competencies.

This Committee will explore the economic landscape and review support 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
- Exploring cultural and linguistic barriers and how they affect the integration of new Americans into the economy

Economic Opportunity Committee members:

- El Hadji Djibril Niang (interim committee lead)
- Rammy Barbari
- Susannah Lepley
- Dr. Milton Vickerman

Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs

Everyone in the Commonwealth is impacted by federal, state and local policies and rules. Services and resources are provided based on funding from these multi-level decision makers; eligibility is determined by criteria specified by these entities; and delivery is made through the outlets and offices associated at the various levels. Overall, this has been an effective system to serve the populations' needs. However, for the aspiring and new American communities many of the services and resources are more complex and change frequently based on modifications to guidance and policy.

This Committee will explore the interconnectivity of governmental policy and changes to those policies that will impact the aspiring and New American 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
- Providing program, policy, and regulation recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly.
- Monitoring federal, state and local legislative issues and determining their impacts
- Identifying grant opportunities to support necessary programs and initiatives

Inter/Intra Governmental Affair Committee members

- Dr. Jennifer Crewalk (committee lead)
- Hassan Ahmad
- Hannah "Mel" Borja
- Juan Santacoloma

UNFAMILIARITY WITH FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

While the members of the Board are accomplished and experienced professionals, the restrictions under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) required shifts in operational norms and behaviors. FOIA constraints have limited the ability of the members to collaborate freely while engaging in the work of the Board. We understand that the need for transparency in our government will impact the efficiency of our work, however, the adjustment has been challenging. The support of administrative staff and legal counsel have been instrumental in the Board's development of appropriate policies and procedures and acclimation to these operational guidelines.

To date, we have been able to achieve quorum at each of our general meetings, however it has been difficult to begin the work of the committees due to the in-person meeting requirements. We are fortunate that the current Executive Committee all reside in the Central Virginia Region and that allows for in-person meetings to continue to build the infrastructure and focus of the Board. However, in the future, we would not be able to depend upon that fortuitous geographic distribution of the leadership of the Board.

Similarly, our Committees include individuals from different geographic regions. This provides significant logistical barriers to the work of our Board. By code §2.2-2497, we are allowed only 4 general meetings per year which would also align with 4 Committee meetings per year. Our Board consists of volunteer appointees, and nearly all have regular employment. Their efforts on behalf of the Administration come at a cost, and we cannot expect them to spend additional time travelling for Committee meetings in addition to the regular general Board meetings. That expectation would not be equitable as members may not have the flexibility to be absent from work, and the subsequent loss of income.

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

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.

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 rule-making.

ONAAB IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

The Office of New Americans (ONA) was established in 2020 to promote the economic and civic success of Virginia's diverse immigrant communities. The Office is composed of an Immigrant Services unit and Refugee Services unit, formerly known as the Office of Newcomer Services (ONS).

The Office is responsible for the implementation of a statewide strategy to provide immigrants with comprehensive assistance related to employment, housing, healthcare, education, citizenship and other services for which they may be eligible. ONA was created by expanding the scope of the Office of Newcomer Services within the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS). The program scope of the refugee services and operations has been well established over the course of many years, and encompasses the Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program (VRRP).

The VRRP supports refugees with social integration and economic empowerment. Support services available to refugee-eligible clients include employment, health, education, youth mentoring, services for older refugees and foster care for unaccompanied refugee minors through the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Foster Care (URM) program. VDSS works in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and federally-contracted agencies to administer the URM program.

With regard to immigrant services, the ONA is in the process of establishing its scope and programs. To assist with this development, the Administration and General Assembly members have created opportunities for guidance and support.

Senior Policy Advisor

The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion created a special Deputy Chief Officer and Senior Policy Advisor position within ODEI to assist with the development of the Office of New Americans. Mona Siddiqui transitioned from the Office of the Attorney General to serve in this role in late 2020. During her time at the OAG, she led the office's human rights initiatives and served as an appointee on the Virginia Asian Advisory Board. In her capacity as the Senior Policy Advisor, Deputy Chief Officer Siddiqui has interfaced with other Office of New Americans across the country and has partnered with the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Social Work, New American Economy, (a bipartisan research and advocacy organization fighting for smart federal, state, and local immigration policies that help grow our economy and create jobs for all Americans), and other community partners to help develop a strategic plan to further enhance services for refugees and also develop more comprehensive services for all New Americans in the Commonwealth.

Strategic Plan

The Senior Policy Advisor and ONA leadership are also engaged in the creation of a strategic plan that will leverage the services and relationships previously developed under the ONS. These services are status specific and have proven effective for those who qualify for the services. For those who do not qualify, services do not have consistent delivery routes that address the many barriers to access that exist for new Americans.

One challenge that the newly created ONA encounters is how the funds will be allocated and applied. Funds that are allotted for refugee resettlement purposes cannot be commingled with funds used for other immigrants. This presents challenges in allocation and development of resources.

The development of this strategic plan will help address the needs and provide tactical and strategic steps to address the integration of new Americans across varying issues and servicing agencies and organizations.

Office of New Americans Advisory Board

Additionally, the authorizing legislation that created the Office of New Americans, also created the Office of New Americans Advisory Board. This Board, as noted previously in this report, consists of 18 citizen appointees from various areas of engagement with respect to the New American population. This Board operates similarly to other advisory boards in the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office: Virginia Asian Advisory Board, Virginia African American Advisory Board, Virginia Council on Women, Virginia Latino Advisory Board, and the Virginia LGBTQ+ Advisory Board. The Board is also tasked with supporting the Office of New Americans through recommendations to the Governor and cabinet members, however it is unique in that it also submits its report to the General Assembly and its legislators. This opens other avenues of policy and budgetary support.

The Office of New Americans has been engaged with the other Office of New Americans across the country. There are roughly ten other state ONA's in existence and the Virginia ONA has been a part of their periodic convenings to share information and best practices. These meetings are coordinated monthly and are generally coordinated by partners like the New American Economy. These meetings have been valuable to learn more about how other ONA's are structured, their scope of services and their mission.

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission Report

In 2004, the General Assembly's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) released a study that examined the integration of immigrant and refugee communities in the Commonwealth. The study "Acclimation of Virginia's Foreign-Born Population" provided the first snapshot of the foreign-born population and their adjustment to life in Virginia. According to the Census Bureau, at the time the report was released, roughly 600,000 individuals (approximately eight percent) of the Commonwealth's residents were foreign born.

In the report it was noted:

Overall, this review found that Virginia's foreign-born population is an integral part of the Virginia economy. Constituting approximately 12 percent of the State's civilian labor force and 44 percent of Virginia's labor force growth over the last decade, Virginia's foreign-born participate in every major sector of the State's economy. Their labor force participation helps keep the State competitive in industries such as agriculture and poultry processing, supports tourism through substantial participation in the hospitality industry, and supports the State's growth in high tech fields, among others.

Despite this positive impact, the study also identified some service needs and costs specifically associated with the foreign-born population. JLARC staff found that there are three primary needs that are unique to or disproportionately experienced by the foreign-born population: access to opportunities to improve English proficiency, access to services and information in their native languages, and access to affordable health care.

The JLARC report also examined the following:

1. What federal government policies and programs affect the immigrant populations in the Commonwealth and have an impact on state or local initiatives?
2. What are the potential needs for state, regional, and local government services to the immigrant populations in the Commonwealth that are unique or typically exceed those of the general population?
3. What are the benefits and costs of the major immigrant populations to the Commonwealth and its economy?
4. What options are available for local, regional, and state governments to facilitate acclimation of the immigrant populations into the Commonwealth's economy and social fabric while preserving ethnic and cultural identity?

The report also reviewed policies and programs across the country to find best practices and suggested policies to assist in the integration of immigrants. For instance, the report highlighted many recommendations including addressing critical needs in addressing language access, one of the Board's guiding principles. The overall guidance of the Report regarding language access is that a statewide comprehensive plan, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act²⁵, is required to address language access and cultural diversity issues. Additionally, a Secretarial-Level Committee should be formed to develop the elements of this comprehensive plan.

Additional recommendations address other issues including state supported citizenship and naturalization programs; law enforcement interaction with immigrant communities; education programs; and federal funding opportunities.

This report provides valuable insights that have already been discussed as part of the Board's work. However, since the publication of this report, immigrant communities have grown and changed significantly. These communities have encountered additional issues and barriers to employment, housing, educational attainment, small business opportunities, transportation services and more.

VCU Needs Assessment Survey

To gain a better overall picture of the barriers to federal, state and local services, the state has commissioned a needs assessment survey in partnership with the Virginia Commonwealth University L Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs. This survey shall be conducted under the guidance of Saltanat Liebert, PhD and Grant Rissler, PhD with inputs from community stakeholders throughout the Commonwealth. This report seeks to reveal the unmet needs and barriers to integration regarding Virginia's immigrant populations. Additionally, the team will explore the attitudes of the communities with respect to formal services available through local, state and federal agencies. It is the ONA's hope that the report will highlight these unmet needs and barriers and develop recommendations to address these issues at all levels.

Observations from the Afghan Evacuees in Virginia

This summer, with the United States withdrawal from Afghanistan, we have witnessed a humanitarian crisis and influx of refugees not seen in the United States since the fall of Saigon. Since August 15, 2021, more than 53,000 evacuees have entered the Commonwealth through Dulles International Airport. Fort Lee, Fort Pickett and Quantico have served as temporary housing for thousands upon thousands of Afghans at Risk, Special Immigrant Visa holders, asylees and Afghan parolees.

The state agencies that responded to the crisis, Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Department of Social Services, and the Office of New Americans were instrumental in effectively standing up the Emergency Repatriation Center and support services at the Dulles International Airport and the Dulles Expo Center. At this time, the Commonwealth could see 1,200 (or more) individuals, from the Afghan evacuation, settle in Virginia.

It was noted that the state team worked in partnership with federal state and local agencies and organizations, including Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), The American Red Cross, Dulles Airport Operations, and Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response (OHSEPR), to set up the Unified Command at the Dulles Marriott.

From the ONAAB perspective, the ONA staff and Senior Policy Advisor were key in leveraging the connections with Northern Virginia resources to provide linguistic and culturally appropriate resources into a very chaotic and rapidly changing crisis environment. Through the efforts of Refugee Programs Consultant, Derek Maxfield, Director Berhe and other ONA staff the state agencies were able to administer support to returning citizens through the State Emergency Mass Repatriation Plan.

The ONA and state resources did not address the needs of the Afghans at Risk (AAR), asylees, parolees and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders. These individuals were the responsibility of and processed by federal agencies including the Department of State and US Department of Health and Human Resources and the Department of Homeland Security. This effort was coordinated and carried out at the Dulles Expo Center.

Some notable observations include:

- The interface between state and federal agencies was at times difficult as the situation was constantly evolving and the sheer numbers of evacuees who transited through Dulles Airport. At times, areas of responsibility were unclear or in transition, and needs were unmet.
- Additionally, the varying statuses of evacuees presented significant problems with processing and access to services. The most severe issue seemed to involve families with mixed status. Very often, there were families that consisted of citizens, SIV's and AAR's. These families did not have guidance or support to address the unique complexities involved in their situations.
- Legal counsel was not made available to evacuees who needed legal counsel to understand how to navigate the complexities in filing for status.
- There was a lack of community coordination to provide focus and oversight on community support. Community response has been overwhelming and there were many initiatives around collecting donations, raising funds, coordinating transportation and other supports. However, some efforts were duplicative, while other needs were unmet.
- One group that experienced inequitable gaps in services were legal permanent residents (LPR) who also evacuated from Afghanistan. These individuals have the legal right to live and work in the United States

and are eligible for US citizenship after 5 years (3 years if they achieve this status through marriage) but were not covered in the emergency repatriation plan. The repatriation plan only addresses the needs of US citizens. This is inequitable because these individuals work and contribute to the economy of the Commonwealth and nation, however, have not achieved citizenship. This is notable and requires a review of other policies that are also discriminatory based on immigration status.

It should be noted that this gap in services and support was first identified by the ONA staff and Senior Policy Advisor who were present at Dulles Airport. The team rallied community support to address the situation and ultimately, Commissioner Duke Storen of the Department of Social Services (DSS) and DSS leadership created a funding partnership with the United Way to address these gaps.

Executive Leadership Team for Immigration Integration

In response to the increased focus on integration of Afghan evacuees in Virginia, the Governor announced the creation of the Executive Leadership Team for Immigration Integration (ELTII) . Per the announcement of this initiative on September 7, 2021, the “team will work across agencies to ensure that Virginia’s refugee resettlement and immigrant integration systems are strong enough to provide for the arrival of SIV families and other evacuees resettling in Virginia, and help these immigrants integrate meaningfully into their new communities.”

The ONAAB is very pleased with the development of this executive level interagency effort to address the issues that this Board is currently addressing. It is our hope that the Board will be invited to participate in these higher-level discussions to address the complexities in access to services as well as other challenges to full integration of aspiring and new Americans into the Commonwealth.

ONAAB IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS- RECOMMENDATIONS

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 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. This is incredibly important to developing the full scope of the ONA and connectivity with other agencies in the Administration.

Elevate the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion to Secretariat level. [Administrative, Budgetary, Legislative] The task of meaningfully integrating aspiring and new Americans into the Commonwealth is a complex and significant undertaking. It is critical that this comprehensive effort is supported by the Office of the Governor and through its Cabinet. The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is a critical lead in this effort as the fundamental work in the integration of these communities fully subscribes to the ONE Virginia plan and embraces the strategic and intentional normalizing of equity in the Commonwealth.

ODEI exists as a cabinet level office, however Dr. Janice Underwood is the only Cabinet member who is not afforded status as a Secretary. Because of this disparity, the work of the ODEI is hampered by organizational and administrative authority, available resources, financial and budgetary limitations, and staffing.

The purpose of ODEI is to:

- Create a statewide assessment to evaluate inequities with formal and informal systems, processes, leaders, legislation, and overall logistics.
- Develop a sustainable framework for the continued promotion of inclusive practices across state government.
- Collaborate with 105+ state agencies within the Commonwealth to ensure equity and inclusion within the areas of employee engagement, hiring and retention practices, and the implementation of a diversity strategic plan; and
- Engage with diverse stakeholders around the Commonwealth to establish and increase inclusive excellence across the Commonwealth

To perform the responsibilities noted above, as well as push forward with the ONE Virginia plan of Inclusive Excellence, the ODEI needs to be positioned for maximum effectiveness and impact.

Additionally, the ODEI should incorporate the following:

- Responsibility to manage the Equity-in-Action and Equity-at-a-Glance resources. While these resources were created to address health equity concerns during the pandemic, they should also be enhanced to include equity data on employment, small business, education, procurement, state employment and other equity based measurables. This is the only logical place to house these resources as this office is tasked with the collaboration with 105+ state agencies to ensure equity and inclusion. The Secretariat would need to be funded to manage the data aggregation and management of these resources.
- Responsibility for the development and management of a statewide language access plan. The ODEI is already leading the task force in assessing the language access plans of state agencies. The expected report shall outline recommendations and accountability measures that will address these significant barriers to access for limited English proficiency Virginians.
- Increased funding for additional staffing and engagement of additional resources to address noted purposes and initiatives. The ODEI is severely understaffed for the significant work required to address equity and inclusion. With the recommended elevation and associated additional responsibilities this additional staffing is necessary.

Position the Office of New Americans for better impact. [Administrative, Legislative] Currently, the Office of New Americans is placed under the Community and Volunteer Services Division within the Strategy and Engagement division. Considering the critical work of the Office of New Americans and intersectionality of the services and barriers that impact New Americans, it is extremely important that the Office of New Americans have more direct influence on matters pertaining to the awareness and access of services to aspiring and New Americans.

Per the Office of New Americans website:

The office is responsible for the implementation of a statewide strategy to provide immigrants with comprehensive assistance related to employment, housing, healthcare, education, citizenship and other services for which they may be eligible.

The Board recognizes the multifaceted and varying nature of the issues impacting aspiring and new Americans. This is evidenced by the committee structure that will work across agencies and secretariats. The ONA should also

be unfettered and enabled to work across agencies and secretariats to address the integration of new Americans within the Commonwealth. The Board expects to explore issues in education, health care access and coverage, housing, small business, transportation, naturalization and more.

As seen through the work that has been done to address the crisis following the Afghan evacuees and the establishment of the Executive Leadership Team on Immigration Integration, it is apparent that more connectivity and influence on the creation and delivery of services to these individuals and other New Americans is necessary. The fact that the ELTII has been created at the highest level and with the inputs of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion signals the focus on equity and recognition of the interagency collaboration that is critical to address the multifaceted challenges of these newcomers.

The current placement of the ONA creates additional layers of administration that hinder engagement with other agencies in separate secretariats. To fully leverage the expertise and competencies of the ONA, the Board highly recommends the placement of the ONA in the aforementioned secretariat of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This aligns the scope and focus of the ONA with the equity lens that is the focus of the ODEI.

It should be recognized that the services and resources that were accessed through the Office of Newcomer Services (ONS) are aptly placed within the Department of Social Services. The DSS partners with 120 local departments of social services along with faith-based and non-profit organizations, to promote the well-being of children and families statewide, including those in the aspiring and new American communities.

The ONS had as its primary responsibility the task of ensuring that local refugee resettlement agencies comply with standards and requirements that accompany federal funding. ONS functioned well where it provided more guidance and support of external agencies that provide case management and other federally funded supports.

Yet, as noted previously, the scope of the needs and issues relevant to the aspiring and new American communities extend beyond the specific purview of the DSS into other secretariats and their agencies. It may be advisable to decouple the ONA and the ONS to better focus resources and efforts.

ONA would then be placed in the aforementioned Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Secretariat to focus on the larger scope of multifaceted issues that exist across agencies and secretariats. The ONS would be a prominent partner of ONA, as it addresses compliance associated with federal funding provided for individuals and communities that are at the beginning of their path as new Americans in the Commonwealth. The ONS would also then not be constrained by concerns of commingling of federally granted funds for purposes outside of the scope of the funding.

With this structure, in addition to the relationship with ONS, the ONA would partner with various secretariats, departments and agencies to address specific issues or areas of concern, i.e. Department of Education, Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Health, Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Elections, etc. as the Board and ONA work towards providing support for all aspiring and new Americans along the full spectrum of unmet needs.

Enhance the Office of New Americans budget to address expanded and unmet needs. [Administrative, Budgetary, Legislative] The original 2020-2021 budget for the Office of New Americans was established at \$350,000, however after budgetary adjustments, the budget was reduced to \$305,000 for the fiscal year. This broke down to roughly \$259,000 for staff and \$46,000 for administrative costs and costs to support the work of the Office of New Americans Advisory Board. The current budget supports two staff under the direction of Seyoum Berhe, the Director of the Office of New Americans.

Per 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 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 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 the budget of the Office of New Americans to align with the Strategic Plan in development. (to be determined) The Senior Policy Advisor Mona Siddiqui and ONA leadership are developing a Strategic Plan for the buildout of the ONA. ONA, through its previous refugee engagement has established connectivity with the various refugee resettlement agencies throughout the Commonwealth. Any budgetary increases should also include provisions for enhancing these services, especially as there will be increased demand for services due to the expected settlement of more than 1,200 Afghan refugees, special immigrant visa holders and Afghan parolees. As this strategic plan is still in development, the Board defers the recommended budgetary increase to the Senior Policy Advisor and ONA 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 2020-2021 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 grossed 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 the maximum four meetings a year. Actual travel costs will depend on the number of times the Board actually meets.

As the Board is requesting to change 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 2021-2022 would be \$563,000 (plus strategic plan budgetary recommendations) in addition to the current budget for the Office of New Americans. Budget year 2022-2023

would include a similar budget enhancement and may include additional requested funding as further services and resources are developed and the strategic plan is implemented.

Support the Office of New Americans through continued support from the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion [Administrative, Budgetary, Legislative] As noted previously, the ONA has been supported by the ODEI through the work of Deputy Chief Officer and Senior Policy Advisor to the ONA, Mona Siddiqui. Deputy Chief Officer Siddiqui’s work has been critical to elevating the work of the ONA across agencies where the concerns and needs of the New American population are most important.

As the ONA is positioned in the organizational hierarchy where its expertise and cultural understanding is often overlooked and underutilized, Deputy Chief Officer Siddiqui has leveraged her position through ODEI to create more synergies and connectivity to other secretariats and agencies outside of DSS. This has been most apparent during the Afghan evacuee crisis and the formation of the Executive Leadership Team for Immigration Integration. This higher-level engagement has been extremely important towards coordination of support as well as longer range focus on issues that will impact the refugees, special immigrant visa holders, and parolees.

Deputy Chief Officer Siddiqui’s position is partially funded for up to three years (FY2022-2023) through a third party. Should the third party not renew this support, the state should provide additional funding to support this position as it plays a critical role in elevating the ONA and the intersectional needs of the New Americans in the Commonwealth.

OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION INDEX

As noted previously the Board has not been able to convene the committees to begin delving into the work of *Access to Services, Economic Opportunity or Inter/Intra Governmental Affairs*. However, these recommendations have been identified as infrastructure and resource gaps that will enable the Board to engage in the expected work more fully. We have included these recommendations broken out into the types of actions that are needed.

Administrative

- Elevate the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion to Secretariat level. (pg. 39)
- Position the Office of New Americans for better impact. (pg. 40)
- Enhance the Office of New Americans budget to address expanded and unmet needs. (pg. 41)
- Support the Office of New Americans through continued support from the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (pg. 44)

Budgetary

- Elevate the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion to Secretariat level. (pg. 39)
- Enhance the Office of New Americans budget to address expanded and unmet needs. (pg. 41)

Legislative

- Amend the Code to allow for more meetings per year. (pg. 33)
- Amend the Code to raise the number of appointed nonlegislative citizen Board members to twenty-one. (pg. 33)
- Amend the Code to include additional ex-officio members to the Board. (pg. 33)
- 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. (pg. 34)
- Commission a new JLARC study to assess the integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth and update the findings from the 2004 report. (pg. 39)
- Elevate the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion to Secretariat level. (pg. 39)
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CONCLUSION

The Office of New Americans Advisory Board wishes to thank Governor Northam, the Office of the Governor, our General Assembly members, the Cabinet Secretaries and their offices, the many agencies within the Administration and in particular, Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer Janice Underwood, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services Duke Storen, Deputy Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mona Siddiqui, Director of the Office of New Americans Seyoum Berhe, Senior Program Consultant Grace Reynolds 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 aspiring and 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.

While the Board has not had the opportunity to fully engage in the collective work of the Board and Office of New Americans, 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 equity and inclusivity.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/VA>
 - ² <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2006/demo/POP-twps0081.html>
 - ³ <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/2012/acs/acs-19.pdf>
 - ⁴ <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2019>
 - ⁵ https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/Pop_Estimate/LPR/lpr_population_estimates_2015_-_2019.pdf.pdf
 - ⁶ <http://data.cmsny.org/>
 - ⁷ [US Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\) I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status, Approvals by Beneficiary State as of November 29, 2018](#)
 - ⁸ [Count of Active DACA Recipients By State or Territory, As of June 30, 2021](#)
 - ⁹ [Virginia 2020 Fact Sheet](#)
 - ¹⁰ [Virginia Refugee Statistics](#)
 - ¹¹ <https://demographics.coopercenter.org/virginia-regions>
 - ¹² <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/virginia/>
 - ¹³ <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-virginia>
 - ¹⁴ <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-virginia>
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