



# STATES LAY THE **FOUNDATION**

## MEET THE MOMENT

A policy roadmap to integrate and welcome  
refugees and immigrants

**June 6, 2025**

9:30-10:30am PDT / 12:30-1:30pm EDT



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## **ABOUT THE IRC**

The IRC responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future. Join the thousands of IRC supporters who have called their representatives, written letters, shared our campaigns or otherwise mobilized to advocate for change in their communities and worldwide.

**[Rescue.org/states-lay-foundation](https://rescue.org/states-lay-foundation)**

# 2025 SUMMIT

## STATES LAY THE FOUNDATION: MEET THE MOMENT

For generations, the International Rescue Committee and our community of supporters have stepped forward to meet the moment during times of international crisis and humanitarian need. This commitment has supported millions of refugees who arrived to the U.S. and demonstrated resolve to start a new future for themselves and their families here in our communities. These new neighbors have shown resilience in crisis, recovered from unimaginable storms, and rebuilt their lives against all odds.

In this moment, they face a new chapter of uncertainty. National commitments to international humanitarian law are shifting and refugees' lives are being upended as humanitarian pathways disintegrate. At a time like this, we must ask: What would we have lost if communities hadn't met the moment—if they hadn't given refugees the chance to build new lives and enrich the cities and towns they now call home? Arguably the economic impact would be severe—on average refugees contribute **\$31.2 billion in federal, state, and local taxes annually**. Innovation and entrepreneurship would have suffered as more than 178,000 refugees are entrepreneurs. But refugees bring so much more—they are our neighbors and friends; we learn culture and are exposed to new languages enriching our lives and our communities.

In this year's **States Lay the Foundation Summit** we will highlight the policies championed by state leaders to support the world's most vulnerable individuals as they rebuild their lives in the United States. Across the U.S., state legislators are standing with their new American neighbors by advancing policies that affirm welcome and support integration. **This year we call on the public to help meet the moment once again by bringing these policies to their own states.** During this virtual summit presenters and panelists will demonstrate how strategic, cost-effective investments in our newest community members can yield long-term benefits for both newcomers and host communities.

Today we find ourselves at a critical crossroads. It is time—more than ever—to rise with courage and determination with refugees and new Americans. **Join us in meeting the moment.**

# AGENDA

**12:30 PM ET**

Welcome and opening remarks by **Hans Van de Weerd**, Senior Vice President of Resettlement, Asylum and Integration at the International Rescue Committee (IRC)

**12:37 PM ET**

Welcome Corps Spotlight by **Indiana State Representative Sue Errington**

**12:40 PM ET**

## **STATE LEGISLATOR PANEL**

- ▶ **Martine Larocque Gulick**, Vermont State Senator
- ▶ **Sarah Trone Garriott**, Iowa State Senator
- ▶ **Elizabeth Velasco**, Colorado State Representative
- ▶ Moderated by: Austyn Smith, State Advocacy Officer, IRC

**1:20 PM ET**

World Education Services (WES) Report Spotlight by **Natalie El-Deiry**, Director of U.S. Policy, WES

**1:25 PM ET**

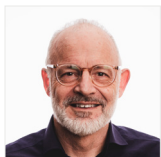
Closing Keynote from **Utah Governor Spencer Cox**

**1:30PM ET**

Closing Remarks by **Genevieve Kessler**, Director of U.S. Advocacy, IRC

# SPEAKERS & MODERATORS

## PRESENTER & SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)



### **HANS VAN DE WEERD:**

Hans Van de Weerd is the Senior Vice President of Resettlement, Asylum and Integration at the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which has 29 regional offices across the nation helping refugees resettle and become self-sufficient. Prior to his current role, Hans was Executive Director of the IRC's office in Northern California.

Before joining the IRC in 2012, Hans was a General Director for Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF)/Doctors without Borders, where his work included leading a campaign for access to essential medicines and directing country programs in India and Iraq. He began his career in the humanitarian field in 2002 at ZOA Refugee Care, where he was Program Director for Afghanistan.

Hans built his leadership, management and motivational skills with a decade of experience in global finance and logistics, working for multinational companies in China and Shanghai. Currently based in New York City, he is a native of the Netherlands. He holds a Master of Science in Public Health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and a Master of Science in European Studies from the University of Amsterdam.



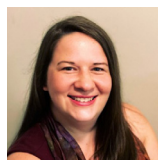
### **INDIANA STATE REPRESENTATIVE SUE ERRINGTON**

State Representative Sue Errington served on the Delaware County Council and in the Indiana State Senate before her first election to the Indiana House of Representatives in 2012. Errington currently serves as the ranking minority member of the Environmental Affairs Committee. She is also a member of the Elections

and Apportionment Committee and serves as vice chair of the Statutory Committee on Ethics.

A dedicated community leader, Errington has spent much of her life working to bring people together to get things done. Errington has a long record of public service on local boards and commissions and with local, state, and national organizations advancing women's rights and good government. Current community service includes the board of directors of Muncie OUTreach, the Delaware County Tobacco Free Coalition, the Muncie/Delaware County Coalition of Women's Organizations, and the board of directors of the Second Harvest Food Bank. Errington also serves as a board member of the Afghan Women's and Kids' Education & Necessities (AWAKEN) organization and the Indiana Recycling Market Development Program through the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM).

Errington is a member of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators (NCEL), the Recycling Advisory Committee of the Muncie Sanitary Board, and the Muncie Friendship Welcome Group, as part of the U.S. Dept. of State's Welcome Corps. She taught Spanish and later served 17 years as the Public Policy Director for Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky. Errington lives in Muncie. She and her late husband, Paul, have two married daughters and two grandchildren.



### **GENEVIEVE KESSLER**

Genevieve Kessler joined the IRC in 2017 and currently serves as the Director of U.S. Advocacy leading both the federal and state portfolios, with the goal of driving strategic engagement and policy deliverables in Congress and the 17 states within the IRC network. Genevieve's efforts have resulted in the



defeat of policies which discriminate against refugees or disrupt the operations which support them. She has led the advance and passage of legislation that supported the integration of newly arrived individuals, including expanding access to education and workforce development opportunities; and building infrastructures in states. Prior to joining the IRC, she worked for two Members of Congress. With creative leadership in resolving key issues impacting constituents, Genevieve built strong relationships with bipartisan elected leaders. Genevieve is a graduate of John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY), where she earned a Master's Degree in Public Administration and now volunteers as an alumni mentor; and Ramapo College of New Jersey, where she graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and currently serves on the Alumni Advisory Board for the School of Humanities and Global Studies. In her free time, Genevieve volunteers with the local chapter of the ASPCA.



#### **AUSTYN SMITH**

Austyn Smith currently serves as the IRC's U.S. Advocacy Officer where she implements engagement with

state and local elected leaders to drive policies which welcome and support the integration of refugees and other new Americans. Previously, Austyn worked as a Legislative Aide for U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (WA), former President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate and Chair of the Committee on Appropriations. Austyn advised on issues including immigration, foreign policy, transportation/ infrastructure, small business, banking/financial services, nutrition and much more. Austyn's professional experience includes roles at think tanks and environmental advocacy groups and in academia. She also worked with a nonprofit in Vietnam that collaborated with villages and communities to achieve their vision of a better future through asset-based community development. Austyn's experience as a daughter of Mexican immigrants brought her to the IRC and stimulated her passion to engage in refugee-related advocacy work. She is a graduate of The George

Washington University, where she earned a master's degree in international affairs with concentrations in conflict resolution and international development. She graduated from Western Washington University with Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Spanish and a minor in German.



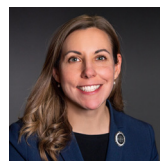
#### **VERMONT STATE SENATOR MARTINE LAROCQUE GULICK**

Martine Larocque Gulick was born in Tachikawa, Japan, in 1966, where her father was serving in the United States Air Force. Her family moved to Vermont in 1972 and she and her siblings attended public schools in South Burlington. She has a BA and MA from the University of Vermont and has called Burlington home since 1995.

Martine is a retired high school teacher who taught French and English and served as Library Director in Vermont and overseas. She has been a member of the Burlington School Board since 2018 and currently serves as Co-Chair of the Finance and Facilities Committee. Martine is a Regional Representative on the Vermont School Board Association and served on the Advisory Council on Literacy.

Martine's two children attended Burlington public schools, and she is ever thankful for the wonderful education and opportunities the district provided.

She is currently serving as Vice-Chair of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee and serves on the Senate Finance Committee.



#### **IOWA STATE SENATOR SARAH TRONE GARRIOTT**

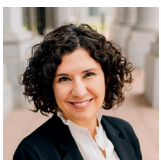
Sarah Trone Garriott was first elected in 2020 and now represents Senate District 14, encompassing Waukee, Adel, Van Meter and the portions of West Des Moines and Clive in Dallas County. An ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Sarah has served as a hospital chaplain and a parish pastor. She currently works for the Des Moines

Area Religious Council Food Pantry Network as the Coordinator of Interfaith Engagement, bringing diverse religious communities together to respond to food insecurity. Sarah and her husband, Will, have two sons and live in West Des Moines.



COLORADO STATE  
REPRESENTATIVE  
**ELIZABETH VELASCO**

Representative Elizabeth Velasco represents House District 57 in western Colorado. She is the first Latina to represent the western slope and the first Mexican-born immigrant in the state legislature. Rep. Velasco grew up in the Vail Valley working in the service industry to pay for her education and support her family. She understands first-hand the struggles and dynamics of the rural resort working class. Before getting elected, she ran an interpretation and translation agency for almost 10 years and became a wildland firefighter and public information officer. The lack of action from previous representatives to solve the ongoing challenges in her community led her to run for office. In her first term, she passed groundbreaking legislation to protect residents of mobile home parks, expand language access in emergency response, improve wildfire resiliency in the state, and hold big polluters accountable. She currently serves as the house majority co whip and co-chairs the Colorado Democratic Latino Caucus and the Wildfire Matters interim committee. Rep. Velasco is a strong voice for supporting working families, protecting natural resources, and adapting to a changing climate in western Colorado.



**NATALIE EL-DEIRY**

Natalie El-Deiry brings over two decades of dynamic experience in the humanitarian, non-profit, and government sectors, passionately championing opportunities for refugees and immigrants. Recognized for her leadership, she recently directed the Utah Center for Global Talent & New Americans,

where she crafted impactful state-wide policies to enhance economic opportunities and social inclusion. Now, as the Director of U.S. Policy at World Education Services, Natalie collaborates with partners and policymakers nationwide to drive meaningful reforms for immigrant and refugee inclusion. Her professional journey is deeply personal, inspired by her family's immigrant roots from Mexico, Egypt, and Canada. Outside of her work, Natalie is a devoted mother of two, who loves traveling, gardening, skiing, and exploring new places with her family.



UTAH GOVERNOR  
**SPENCER COX**

Gov. Spencer J. Cox is a husband, father, farmer, recovering attorney, and Utah's 18th governor. He also served as the 2023-2024 chairman of the **National Governors Association**.

Gov. Cox has a long track record of public service, serving as a city councilmember, mayor, county commissioner and state legislator before being appointed as Utah's lieutenant governor in 2013. He was sworn in as governor on Jan. 4, 2021.

During his first term in office, Gov. Cox cut \$1.1 billion in taxes, implemented landmark changes in water law, water conservation and infrastructure planning, locked in record funding for education and teachers, enacted universal school choice and secured funds for affordable housing. A long-time advocate for suicide prevention and mental health resources, he's become a national voice on protecting youth from the harms of social media. He also signed early education and workforce program funding, launched the One Utah Health Collaborative, and expanded opportunities for women, diverse communities and those living in rural parts of the state.

With a focus on solutions, Gov. Cox promotes respect in politics and innovation in government, works across party lines to find common ground and regularly participates in hands-on service projects. These elements were the foundation of his NGA Chair's Initiative, **"Disagree Better: Healthy Conflict for Better Policy."**

A sixth-generation Utahn, Gov. Cox was born and raised in Fairview, a town of 1,200 in the center of the state. He met First Lady Abby Palmer Cox at age 16 and they married after he returned from serving a two-year mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Mexico. He attended Snow College, Utah State University and the Washington and Lee University School of Law, then clerked for U.S. District Judge Ted Stewart and worked at a Salt Lake City law firm. Several years later, Gov. Cox and First Lady Cox moved back to Fairview to raise their four children – Gavin, Kaleb, Adam, and Emma Kate – on the family farm. The governor, first lady and Emma Kate currently reside in the Kearns Mansion, also known as the Governor's Mansion, in Salt Lake City.



# CODIFYING THE STATE'S COMMITMENT TO RESETTLEMENT

**Codifying a state's commitment to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) will strengthen protections against harmful political actions and ensure the programmatic resiliency and access for those individuals resettled to the state.**

## UTAH

### **S.B. 31: REFUGEE SERVICES AMENDMENTS**

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section 35A-1-202 is amended to read:

#### **35A-1-202 . Divisions -- Creation -- Duties -- Workforce Appeals Board, councils, Child Care Advisory Committee, and economic service areas.**

(1) There is created within the department the following divisions:

- (a) the Workforce Development Division to administer the development and 37 implementation of employment assistance programs;
- (b) the Workforce Research and Analysis Division;
- (c) the Unemployment Insurance Division to administer Chapter 4, Employment 40 Security Act;
- (d) the Eligibility Services Division to administer public assistance eligibility;
- (e) the Division of Adjudication to adjudicate claims or actions in accordance with this title;
- (f) the Housing and Community Development Division, which is described in Sections 35A-8-201 and 35A-8-202;
- (g) the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation, which is described in Section 35A-13-103;
- (h) the Office of Homeless Services, which is described in Section 35A-16-202[.] ;
- (i) the Office of Child Care, which is described in Sections 35A-3-202 and 35A-3-203;
- (j) the Refugee Services Office, which is described in Chapter 3, Part 8, Refugee Services.

(2) In addition to the divisions created under Subsection

(1), within the department are the

- (a) the Workforce Appeals Board created in Section 35A-1-205;
- (b) the State Workforce Development Board created in Section 35A-1-206;
- (c) the Employment Advisory Council created in Section 35A-4-502;

(d) the Child Care Advisory Committee created in Section 35A-3-205; and

(e) the economic service areas created in accordance with Chapter 2, Economic Service Areas.

Section 2. Section 35A-3-103 is amended to read:

**35A-3-103 . Department responsibilities.**

The department shall:

- (1) administer public assistance programs assigned by the Legislature and the governor;
- (2) determine eligibility for public assistance programs in accordance with the requirements 6 of this chapter;
- (3) cooperate with the federal government in the administration of public assistance programs;
- (4) administer state employment services;
- (5) provide for the compilation of necessary or desirable information, statistics, and reports;
- (6) perform other duties and functions required by law;
- (7) monitor the application of eligibility policy;
- (8) develop personnel training programs for effective and efficient operation of the programs administered by the department;
- (9) provide refugee resettlement services in accordance with Section 35A-3-803;
- (10) provide child care assistance for children in accordance with Part 2, Office of Child Care;
- (11) provide services that enable an applicant or recipient to qualify for affordable housing in cooperation with:
  - (a) the Utah Housing Corporation;
  - (b) the Housing and Community Development Division; and
  - (c) local housing authorities;
- (12) administer the Medicaid Eligibility Quality Control function in accordance with 42 C.F.R. Sec. 431.812; and
- (13) conduct non-clinical eligibility hearings and issue final decisions in adjudicative proceedings, including expedited appeals as defined in 42 C.F.R. Sec. 431.224, for medical assistance eligibility under:
  - (a) Title 26B, Chapter 3, Health Care - Administration and Assistance; or
  - (b) Title 26B, Chapter 3, Part 9, Utah Children's Health Insurance Program. Section 3. Section 35A-3-801 is enacted to read:

**Part 8. Refugee Services**

**35A-3-801 . Definitions.**

As used in this part:

- (1) "Director" means the director of the Refugee Services Office.

(2) "Office" means the Refugee Services Office created in Section 35A-3-802.

(3) "Refugee" means a person who is lawfully present in the United States and who meets the definition of a refugee under the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1101(a)(42), and related federal regulations.

Section 4. Section 35A-3-802 is enacted to read: **35A-3-802 . Refugee Services Office - Creation.**

(1) There is created within the department a Refugee Services Office.

(2) The office shall be administered by a director who shall be appointed by the executive director and who may be removed from that position at the will of the executive director.

Section 5. Section 35A-3-803 is enacted to read: **35A-3-803 . Functions and duties of office -- Annual report.**

(1) The office shall:

- (a) provide refugee resettlement services to eligible refugees pursuant to federal regulations;
- (b) operate a refugee cash assistance program;
- (c) provide administrative support services to any refugee advisory committee;
- (d) work collaboratively with community partners for the delivery of services to refugees;
- (e) coordinate with the department to include in the annual written report, described in Section 35A-1-109, information regarding refugee services; and
- (f) make rules, in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, and consistent with state and federal law establishing the eligibility requirements for refugee case assistance.

(2) The office may apply for, accept, or expend gifts or donations from public or private sources.

Section 6. Section 35A-3-804 is enacted to read: **35A-3-804 . Duties of director.**

(1) The director shall:

- (a) enforce rules made by the department regulating the use of services provided by the office; and
- (b) supervise office staff and prepare an annual work plan.

(2) The director may apply for, accept, and expend donations from public or private sources to assist the office in fulfilling its statutory obligations.

Section 7. Section **35A-3-805 is enacted to read: 35A-3-805 . Refugee services fund -- Use of money -- Committee and director duties -- Restrictions.**

(1) There is created an expendable special revenue fund, known as the "Refugee Services Fund."

(2) The director shall administer the fund with input from the department and any advisory committee involved with the provision of refugee services within the department.

- (3) (a) Money shall be deposited into the fund from legislative appropriations, federal grants, private foundations, and individual donors.
- (b) The director shall encourage a refugee who receives services funded under Subsection (8) to be a donor to the fund when the refugee's financial situation improves sufficiently to make a donation.
- (4) Except for money restricted to a specific use under federal law or by a donor, the director may not spend money from the fund without the input described in Subsection (2).
- (5) The state treasurer shall invest the money in the fund under Title 51, Chapter 7, State Money Management Act, and all interest or other earnings derived from the fund money shall be deposited into the fund.
- (6) Money in the fund may not be used by the director for administrative expenses.
- (7) If the department establishes a refugee services advisory committee referenced in Subsection (2), the committee may:
  - (a) advise the director on refugee services needs in the state and on relevant operational aspects of any grant or revenue collection program established under this part;
  - (b) recommend specific refugee projects to the director;
  - (c) recommend policies and procedures for administering the fund;
  - (d) make recommendations on grants made from the fund for refugee services activities authorized under this section;
  - (e) advise the director on the criteria by which grants from the fund shall be made;
  - (f) recommend the order approved projects should be funded;
  - (g) make recommendations regarding the distribution of money from the fund in accordance with federal or donor restrictions; and
  - (h) have joint responsibility to solicit public and private funding for the fund.
- (8) The director may use fund money to:
  - (a) train an existing refugee organization to develop its capacity to operate professionally and effectively and to become an independent, viable organization; or
  - (b) provide grants to refugee organizations and other entities identified in Subsection (9) to assist them:
    - (i) with case management;
    - (ii) in meeting emergency housing needs for refugees;
    - (iii) in providing English language services;
    - (iv) in providing interpretive services;
    - (v) in finding and maintaining employment for refugees;
    - (vi) in collaborating with the state's public education system to improve the involvement of refugee parents in assimilating their children into public schools;

- (vii) in meeting the health and mental health needs of refugees;
  - (viii) in providing or arranging for child care services; or
  - (ix) in administering refugee services.
- (9) The director, with the input described in Subsection (2), may grant fund money for refugee services outlined in Subsection (8) through a request for proposal process to:
- (a) local governments;
  - (b) nonprofit community, charitable, or neighborhood-based organizations or private for-profit organizations involved with providing or arranging for the provision of refugee services; or
  - (c) regional or statewide nonprofit organizations.
- (10) (a) The director shall enter into a written agreement with each entity that successfully applies for a grant.
- (b) The agreement shall include specific terms for each grant consistent with the provisions of this section, including the structure, amount, and nature of the grant.
- (11) The director shall monitor the activities of the recipients of grants issued from the fund on an annual basis to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions imposed on the recipient by the fund.
- (12) The director shall require an entity that receives a grant under this section to provide periodic accounting of how the money was used.
- (13) As part of the annual written report described in Section 35A-1-109, the director shall report the status of the fund, including programs and services funded by the fund.

Section 8. Section 35A-3-806 is enacted to read: **35A-3-806 . Continuation of refugee services.**

- (1) In accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, the department may make rules to provide for the administration and coordination of services to refugees beyond the time period refugee assistance is provided or funded by the federal government, including the provisions of:
- (a) services to address emergency needs;
  - (b) English language training; and
  - (c) services for victims of domestic violence.
- (2) The director shall administer and coordinate services under this section:
- (a) with input from the department and any office or advisory committee involved with the provision of refugee services within the department; and
  - (b) in accordance with any state and federal requirements related to the provision of services to refugees.
- Section 9. Repealer. This bill repeals: Section 35A-3-702, Continuation of refugee services. Section 35A-3-701, Refugee services fund -- Use of money -- Committee and director duties -- Restrictions. Section 10. Effective Date. This bill takes effect on May 7, 2025.

# STATEWIDE GOVERNMENT LANGUAGE ACCESS ASSESSMENT

**More than 21 million people who speak at least 350 languages across the United States are limited English proficient (or LEP). For these 21 million people, language barriers can pose a substantial obstacle. Language access helps bridge this gap. By connecting LEP individuals with the services and institutions they need to thrive, language access facilitates the inclusion, wellbeing, safety, and success of our communities.**

## **COLORADO**

**H.B. 1153: Concerning a statewide language access assessment covering principal departments, and, in connection therewith, making an appropriation.**

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. In Colorado Revised Statutes, add 24-30-105 as follows:

### **24-30-105. Statewide language access assessment - report - legislative declaration -definitions.**

**(1) Legislative declaration.** THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS AND DECLARES THAT:

(a) ALMOST NINE HUNDRED THOUSAND COLORADANS SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH, WITH THE TOP FIVE LANGUAGES BEING SPANISH, CHINESE, VIETNAMESE, GERMAN, AND RUSSIAN, AND MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND COLORADANS FACE LINGUISTIC BARRIERS TO ACCESSING STATE GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS;

(b) PROVIDING LANGUAGE ACCESS FOR STATE GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS IS KEY TO IMPROVING THEIR EFFECTIVENESS AND SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION OF IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES INTO COLORADO'S CIVIC, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL LIFE;

(c) IT IS THE INTENT OF THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS IN THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT TO WORK ADMINISTRATIVELY, IN CONCERT WITH THE APPROPRIATE OFFICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL, TO ESTABLISH AN INTERIM LANGUAGE ACCESS WORKING GROUP MADE UP OF THE PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENTS OF THE STATE;

(d) ONCE ESTABLISHED, THE INTERIM LANGUAGE ACCESS WORKING GROUP WILL WORK TO DRAFT A STATEWIDE LANGUAGE ACCESS POLICY FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE GOVERNOR;

(e) UPON APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT POLICY BY THE GOVERNOR, A LANGUAGE ACCESS UNIVERSAL POLICY WILL BE ADOPTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL;



(f) THE LANGUAGE ACCESS ASSESSMENT CREATED IN THIS SECTION WILL ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LANGUAGE ACCESS UNIVERSAL POLICY IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF MULTILINGUAL COLORADANS AND WILL ASSESS THE READINESS OF PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENTS TO MEET THE STATEWIDE LANGUAGE ACCESS STANDARDS; AND

(g) UPON COMPLETION OF THE ASSESSMENT AND NOT LATER THAN DECEMBER 31, 2026, THE INTERIM LANGUAGE ACCESS WORKING GROUP WILL DISSOLVE AND TRANSITION TO A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MAINTAINED BY THE APPROPRIATE OFFICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL. TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL WILL WORK TO ENSURE REPRESENTATION IN THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FROM LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS AND OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH PROFESSIONAL OR LIVED EXPERIENCE WITH LANGUAGE ACCESS INITIATIVES AND FROM ACROSS STATE AGENCIES, WHILE LIMITING TOTAL PARTICIPATION TO TWENTY PEOPLE. THE ONGOING WORK OF THE LANGUAGE ACCESS COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE WILL BE INFORMED BY THE WORK OF THE INTERIM

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LANGUAGE ACCESS WORKING GROUP AND WILL FOCUS ON IMPLEMENTING THE LANGUAGE ACCESS UNIVERSAL POLICY WITH ONGOING OBSERVATION OF BEST PRACTICES IN THE PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENTS.

(2) **Definitions.** AS USED IN THIS SECTION, UNLESS THE CONTEXT OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

(a) "DEPARTMENT" MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL CREATED IN SECTION 24-1-128.

(b) "EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR" MEANS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL.

(c) "LANGUAGE ACCESS ASSESSMENT" OR "ASSESSMENT" MEANS THE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT ON LANGUAGE ACCESS READINESS REQUIRED BY SUBSECTION (3) OF THIS SECTION.

(d) "LANGUAGE ACCESS UNIVERSAL POLICY" MEANS THE STATEWIDE POLICY STANDARDS FOR LANGUAGE ACCESS IDENTIFIED BY THE INTERIM LANGUAGE ACCESS WORKING GROUP INITIATED BY THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS AND THE DEPARTMENT IN 2025.

(e) "LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS" MEANS INDIVIDUALS SEEKING TO ACCESS STATE GOVERNMENT SERVICES IN THE LANGUAGE OF THEIR CHOICE WHO MAY HAVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY THAT REQUIRES LANGUAGE SUPPORT IN CERTAIN CONTEXTS. "LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS" INCLUDES INDIVIDUALS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AS PROVIDED BY TITLE VI OF THE "CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964," 42 U.S.C. SEC. 2000D ET SEQ.; FEDERAL EXECUTIVE ORDER 13166, "IMPROVING ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY," AS PUBLISHED IN 65 FED. REG. 50121 (AUGUST 11, 2000); AND OTHER FEDERAL ANTI-DISCRIMINATION STATUTES.

(f) "OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS" MEANS THE COLORADO OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS CREATED IN SECTION 8-3.7-103.

(g) "OTHER COVERED ENTITY" MEANS A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ENTITY THAT RECEIVES STATE FUNDING OR CONTRACTS TO ADMINISTER PROGRAMS OR SERVICES FOR THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING RECEIVING STATE FUNDING THROUGH GRANTS, PURCHASE-OF-SERVICE CONTRACTS, OR ANY OTHER

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ARRANGEMENT BY WHICH THE STATE PROVIDES OR OTHERWISE MAKES AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE IN THE FORM OF MONEY TO A PERSON FOR THE PURPOSE OF RENDERING SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC.

(h) "PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT" MEANS A PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT LISTED IN SECTION 24-1-110; EXCEPT THAT "PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT" DOES NOT INCLUDE THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY, OR THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW.

(i) "THIRD-PARTY ENTITY" MEANS AN ENTITY THAT HAS ENTERED INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT TO CONDUCT ALL OR PART OF THE LANGUAGE ACCESS ASSESSMENT.

(3) **Statewide language access assessment.** (a) THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS, SHALL ASSESS OR CONTRACT FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF THE READINESS OF PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENTS TO MEET THE LANGUAGE ACCESS STANDARDS OUTLINED IN THE LANGUAGE ACCESS UNIVERSAL POLICY. IN ADDITION TO ANY AREA OF ASSESSMENT DEEMED APPROPRIATE BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS, OR THE THIRD-PARTY ENTITY, THE ASSESSMENT MUST IDENTIFY:

(I) THE NEEDS OF PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENTS TO MEET THE STANDARDS OUTLINED IN THE LANGUAGE ACCESS UNIVERSAL POLICY, INCLUDING REQUESTS FOR GUIDANCE, TRAINING, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE;

(II) RELEVANT LANGUAGE ACCESS MATERIALS FROM PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENTS, INCLUDING LANGUAGE ACCESS PLANS, POSITION DESCRIPTIONS RELATED TO LANGUAGE ACCESS, PROCEDURES RELATED TO LANGUAGE ACCESS, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OR TRAINING MATERIALS;

(III) INFORMATION ON CURRENT LANGUAGE SERVICES CONTRACTS, EXPENDITURES, AND FUNDING SOURCES RELATED TO LANGUAGE ACCESS;

(IV) THE PUBLIC-FACING RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENTS, INCLUDING DESIGNATING WHICH PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENTS AND THEIR SUBCONTRACTORS DO AND DO NOT HAVE FREQUENT CONTACT WITH LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS; AND

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(V) OTHER COVERED ENTITIES THAT MAY BE SUBJECT TO THE STANDARDS OUTLINED IN THE LANGUAGE ACCESS UNIVERSAL POLICY.

(b) A PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT SHALL PROVIDE ANY NONCONFIDENTIAL DATA AND NON-PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION THAT IS NECESSARY TO COMPLETE THE ASSESSMENT, AS AVAILABLE, UPON REQUEST OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OR THE THIRD-PARTY ENTITY.

(c) (I) THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MAY ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH ONE OR MORE THIRD-PARTY ENTITIES TO CONDUCT ALL OR PART OF THE ASSESSMENT.

(II) A THIRD-PARTY ENTITY THAT ENTERS INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO CONDUCT ALL OR PART OF THE ASSESSMENT MUST HAVE DEMONSTRATED EXPERTISE IN WORKING WITH STATE GOVERNMENTS ON LANGUAGE ACCESS INITIATIVES, SUCH AS DEVELOPING LANGUAGE ACCESS POLICIES OR PLANS.

(III) THE THIRD-PARTY ENTITY MAY BE FROM OUTSIDE COLORADO

(4) **Report.** (a) AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ASSESSMENT AND NOT LATER THAN DECEMBER 31, 2026, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS, OR THE THIRD-PARTY ENTITY, AS APPROPRIATE, SHALL CREATE A REPORT SUMMARIZING THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING:

(I) IMPROVING EFFICIENCY, INCREASING QUALITY OF SERVICE, REDUCING COST, AVOIDING DUPLICATIVE WORK, BUILDING ON EXISTING BEST PRACTICES, AND MINIMIZING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN WITH RESPECT TO THE PROVISION OF LINGUISTICALLY ACCESSIBLE GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS TO LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS;

(II) ADDRESSING GAPS AND IMPROVING MEANINGFUL SERVICE THROUGH CHANGES TO LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES, PRACTICES, AND PROCEDURES;

(III) EVALUATING POTENTIAL TECHNOLOGICAL OPTIONS FOR INCREASING LANGUAGE ACCESS, SUCH AS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE; AND

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(IV) DETERMINING WHAT INFRASTRUCTURE IS NEEDED TO ENSURE FULL AND SUSTAINABLE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS OUTLINED IN THE LANGUAGE ACCESS UNIVERSAL POLICY.

(b) THE REPORT MUST INCLUDE AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS THAT DOES NOT EXCEED TWO PAGES. THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY MUST BE WRITTEN IN PLAIN LANGUAGE AND MUST BE AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AND THE OTHER FIVE MOST COMMONLY SPOKEN LANGUAGES IN THE STATE BY POPULATION OF LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS.

(c) (I) THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SHALL MAKE THE REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ON THE DEPARTMENT'S WEBSITE.

(II) THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS SHALL MAKE THE REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ON THE OFFICE'S WEBSITE.

(III) UPON REQUEST, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OR THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS SHALL PROVIDE A COPY OF THE REPORT IN ANY REQUESTED LANGUAGE.

(d) IN JANUARY 2027, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL INCLUDE, AS PART OF ITS PRESENTATION DURING ITS "SMART ACT" HEARING REQUIRED BY SECTION 2-7-203, A SUMMARY OF THE INFORMATION INCLUDED IN THE REPORT REQUIRED BY THIS SUBSECTION (4) CONCERNING THE LANGUAGE ACCESS ASSESSMENT.

**SECTION 2. Appropriation.** For the 2025-26 state fiscal year, \$100,000 is appropriated to the department of personnel for use by the Colorado equity office. This appropriation is from the general fund. To implement this act, the office may use this appropriation for personal services. Any money appropriated in this section not expended prior to July 1, 2026, is further appropriated to the office through December 31, 2026, for the same purpose.

**SECTION 3. Safety clause.** The general assembly finds, determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety or for appropriations for

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# OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

**Offices of New Americans continue to serve as a critical link in state government to ensure that new Americans may equitably access state services. It also serves as a critical link for state agencies to engage with impacted communities.**

## VERMONT

### **H.375: AN ACT RELATING TO CREATING THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICAN STUDY COMMITTEE**

Sec. 1. OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS STUDY COMMITTEE; REPORT (a) Creation. There is created the Office of New Americans Study Committee to make recommendations for creating an independent Office of New Americans.

(b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following members:

- (1) the Director of the Vermont Refugee Office, who shall be Chair;
- (2) one member, appointed by the Commissioner of Labor;
- (3) one member, appointed by the Executive Director of the Office of Racial Equity; and
- (4) six members, appointed by the Governor, one who must be a New American with lived experience, who shall include:
  - (A) one member, nominated by the Association of Africans Living in Vermont;
  - (B) one member, nominated by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants;
  - (C) one member, nominated by the Vermont Afghan Alliance;
  - (D) one member, nominated by the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation;
  - (E) one member, nominated by Migrant Justice; and
  - (F) one member, nominated by the Vermont State College System.

(c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall study and submit a written report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development and on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Government Operations concerning recommendations for creating an independent Office of New Americans, including:

- (1) a summary of the current demographic, economic, and public health data regarding New Americans in the State and information regarding the government services being utilized and underutilized by New Americans;
- (2) a summary or survey of varying and successful approaches to providing government services to

New Americans in other states, with particular focus on the topics of the role of education and training institutions, professional licensing, housing, and support for employers and municipalities;

(3) in consultation with community-based organizations composed of or serving New Americans, the Vermont Asylum Assistance Project, State agencies and departments that provide services to New Americans, the Secretary of State's Office, municipal government leaders, educational institutions, and business leaders, information on:

(A) the existing State and local-level barriers for New Americans for gainfully participating in the State's workforce, economy, and business communities;

(B) additional governmental services needed by New Americans but not yet offered by the State; and

(C) the transfer or consolidation of existing governmental services for New Americans that would be more efficiently provided by a new Office of New Americans;

(4) the proposed structure, duties, funding, and labor needs of an Office of New Americans; and (5) a definition of the term "New Americans" for the purposes of an Office of New Americans

(d) The Committee may create subcommittees, with duties and leadership to be assigned by the Chair. (e) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Agency of Human Services.

(f) Date of Report. On or before September 1, 2026, the Committee shall submit the written report required by subsection (c) of this section.

(g) Meetings.

(1) The Chair shall call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on or before September 1, 2025.

(2) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

(3) The Committee shall cease to exist on the earlier of September 1, 2026 or the date that the Committee submits its written report.

(h) Compensation and reimbursement.

(1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee serving in the member's capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than 10 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

(2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 10 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Human Services.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE This act shall take effect on passage.

# STATE RESOURCING FOR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

**States can invest resources to support programming that integrates refugees into the community. These investments have high returns as refugees enter the workforce—increasing spending power and taxes for the local economy.**

## **IOWA**

**S.F. 223: An Act appropriating moneys to the department of health and human services for refugee resettlement assistance.**

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

Section 1. APPROPRIATION — REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE.

1. There is appropriated from the general fund of the state to the department of health and human services for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2025, the following amount, or so much thereof as is necessary, to be used for the purposes designated:  
For distribution to nonprofit resettlement agencies participating in the reception and placement assistance program under a cooperative agreement with the United States department of state for expenses incurred to provide resettlement assistance to refugees in Iowa.

..... \$ 2,500,000

2. The department of health and human services shall distribute the appropriated moneys proportionally to each nonprofit resettlement agency based on the number of refugees each nonprofit resettlement agency sponsors under the nonprofit resettlement agency's cooperative agreement with the United States department of state.
3. The department of health and human services shall distribute the appropriated moneys no later than seven calendar days after the effective date of this Act.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Act, being deemed of immediate importance, takes effect upon enactment.  
EXPLANATION

**The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.**

This bill appropriates \$2.5 million for FY 2024-2025 from the general fund of the state to the department of health and human services (HHS) to distribute to nonprofit resettlement agencies (agency) participating in the reception and placement assistance program under the United States department of state to provide resettlement assistance to refugees in Iowa. HHS shall distribute the moneys proportionally to each agency based on the number of refugees the agency sponsors under the cooperative agreement. The bill takes effect upon enactment, and HHS shall distribute the moneys no later than seven calendar days after enactment.



# STATES LAY THE **FOUNDATION**

## INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future. Join the thousands of IRC supporters who have called their representatives, written letters, shared our campaigns or otherwise mobilized to advocate for change in their communities and worldwide.

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**[Rescue.org/states-lay-foundation](https://rescue.org/states-lay-foundation)**

