

**HOUSE BILL NO. 188**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA  
THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

**BY REPRESENTATIVE MINA**

**Introduced: 4/11/25**

**Referred: State Affairs, Finance**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act establishing the welcoming Alaska office; establishing the welcoming Alaska**  
2 **center; establishing the Welcoming Alaska Advisory Committee; repealing the office of**  
3 **citizenship assistance; and providing for an effective date."**

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

5 \* **Section 1.** AS 23.05 is amended by adding new sections to read:

6 **Sec. 23.05.131. Welcoming Alaska office.** (a) The welcoming Alaska office is  
7 established in the office of the commissioner. The office shall

8 (1) provide to new immigrants and newcomers employment  
9 information, referrals to employment services, including job placement services, and  
10 information about how to use labor unions, administrative agencies, and court actions  
11 to pursue claims or charges of job discrimination, illegal termination of employment,  
12 sexual harassment, and unsafe working conditions;

13 (2) consult with stakeholders, including state agencies and local  
14 governments, to identify strategies to reduce licensing and other employment barriers

1 for new immigrants and newcomers;

2 (3) use the education and experience of new immigrants and  
3 newcomers to benefit the economy of the state;

4 (4) contract with other state agencies to develop and administer  
5 programs or services that promote entrance into and mobility within the workforce for  
6 new immigrants and newcomers;

7 (5) consult with stakeholders, including state agencies and local  
8 governments, to develop and implement a statewide strategy to support businesses in  
9 recruiting and retaining workers who are new immigrants and newcomers;

10 (6) advise the commissioner on

11 (A) improving employment opportunities for new immigrants  
12 and newcomers;

13 (B) preventing employment discrimination against new  
14 immigrants and newcomers;

15 (C) cooperating with state and federal agencies to accomplish  
16 the office's mission;

17 (D) supporting the economic and social integration of new  
18 immigrants and newcomers; and

19 (E) reducing the exploitation of new immigrants and  
20 newcomers;

21 (7) subject to appropriation, offer grants to support the economic and  
22 social integration of new immigrants and newcomers;

23 (8) serve as a convener for community-based organizations serving  
24 new immigrants and newcomers;

25 (9) design and implement strategies and programs to make the state a  
26 more welcoming place for new immigrants and newcomers;

27 (10) serve as a point of contact for all state agencies regarding issues  
28 affecting new immigrants and newcomers;

29 (11) subject to appropriation, establish the welcoming Alaska center  
30 under AS 25.05.134 and operate a toll-free multilingual hotline for referral of services;

31 (12) coordinate with departments and nonprofit organizations to assist

1 new immigrants and newcomers in improving quality-of-life issues, including access  
2 to business opportunities, education, employment, housing, healthcare, and other  
3 services;

4 (13) subject to appropriation, assist political subdivisions with fees and  
5 other costs associated with visa applications, recruitment, and housing support for new  
6 immigrants and newcomers;

7 (14) research and analyze economic and demographic trends to better  
8 serve new immigrants and newcomers;

9 (15) coordinate and establish best practices for language access  
10 initiatives for all state agencies;

11 (16) serve as an information clearinghouse on information regarding  
12 new immigrants and newcomers; and

13 (17) make policy recommendations to the governor and the legislature  
14 on issues affecting new immigrants and newcomers.

15 (b) The office may contract with other organizations as appropriate to further  
16 the goals of the office.

17 (c) The governor shall appoint an individual to serve as the executive director  
18 of the office. The executive director is in the partially exempt service under AS 39.25  
19 (State Personnel Act).

20 (d) The department shall adopt regulations necessary to implement this  
21 section.

22 **Sec. 23.05.132. Welcoming Alaska liaison.** (a) Each principal department in  
23 the executive branch shall designate one staff member to serve as a liaison between  
24 the department and the office.

25 (b) A liaison shall

26 (1) disseminate information about services offered by the department  
27 that are available to new immigrants and newcomers, department staff, the office, and  
28 the public;

29 (2) communicate with the office on issues affecting new immigrants  
30 and newcomers;

31 (3) when applicable, coordinate between the office, the liaison's

1 department, and professional boards within the liaison's department to assist the office  
2 with license applications from new immigrants and newcomers.

3 **Sec. 23.05.133. Welcoming Alaska Advisory Committee.** (a) The  
4 Welcoming Alaska Advisory Committee is established in the department and shall be  
5 staffed and administered by the office. The advisory committee consists of the  
6 following nine members:

7 (1) one nonvoting member who is a member of the house of  
8 representatives appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;

9 (2) one nonvoting member who is a member of the senate appointed by  
10 the president of the senate;

11 (3) seven voting members appointed by the governor as follows:

12 (A) a representative from a nonprofit organization that provides  
13 employment or language services to new immigrants and newcomers;

14 (B) a representative from a tribal nonprofit organization;

15 (C) a representative from the Alaska Council of School  
16 Administrators;

17 (D) a representative from the business community;

18 (E) a representative from a nonprofit legal services agency that  
19 provides services to immigrants and refugees;

20 (F) a representative from the criminal justice system;

21 (G) a member of the public.

22 (b) The committee shall

23 (1) assist the office with developing recommendations for policies,  
24 procedures, regulations, and legislation to help ensure state government and state  
25 programs are accessible and responsive to the needs of new immigrants and  
26 newcomers;

27 (2) work with the office to monitor the work of state agencies to  
28 include and retain new immigrants and newcomers in state programs;

29 (3) conduct public meetings, as requested by the governor or the  
30 office, for the public to comment and make suggestions on attracting to and retaining  
31 in the state new immigrants and newcomers and improving the employment

1 opportunities, inclusion in civic matters, and community connections of new  
2 immigrants and newcomers;

3 (4) conduct studies, on request of the governor or the office, on issues  
4 affecting new immigrants and newcomers;

5 (5) advise the office on ways to increase outreach to new immigrants  
6 and newcomers; and

7 (6) review budget requests of the office and recommend to the  
8 commissioner amounts for appropriations to the office.

9 (c) A voting member of the committee appointed by the governor serves at the  
10 pleasure of the governor for staggered terms of four years until reappointed or  
11 replaced. If a vacancy occurs among the voting members, the governor shall appoint a  
12 member for the unexpired portion of the term.

13 (d) Voting members of the committee shall elect a member to serve as chair.

14 (e) A majority of the committee constitutes a quorum.

15 (f) The committee shall meet at least twice a year. A meeting may be held at  
16 the call of the chair, by request of a majority of the committee, or at the request of the  
17 executive director of the office.

18 (g) A member of the committee receives no salary but is entitled to per diem  
19 and travel expenses authorized for boards and commissions under AS 39.20.180.

20 **Sec. 23.05.134. Welcoming Alaska center.** (a) Subject to appropriation, the  
21 office shall establish a welcoming Alaska center in one or more communities to  
22 provide virtual and in-person information and assistance for new immigrants and  
23 newcomers. The office shall prioritize establishing a welcoming Alaska center in an  
24 existing state office facility or on a University of Alaska campus that is easily  
25 accessible and conveniently located.

26 (b) A welcoming Alaska center shall provide the following services to new  
27 immigrants and newcomers:

28 (1) English and Alaska Native language instruction;

29 (2) employment services and training; and

30 (3) assistance with access to government programs and community  
31 services.

1                   **Sec. 23.05.135. Definitions.** In AS 23.05.131 – 23.05.135,

2                   (1) "newcomer" means a person who moved to the state from another  
3 state in the preceding 36 months;

4                   (2) "new immigrant" means a person, or the child of a person, who has  
5 arrived, or will arrive, to the state as an immigrant or refugee;

6                   (3) "office" means the welcoming Alaska office established under  
7 AS 23.05.131.

8       \* **Sec. 2.** AS 39.25.120(c) is amended by adding a new paragraph to read:

9                   (22) the executive director of the welcoming Alaska office.

10       \* **Sec. 3.** AS 23.05.125 is repealed.

11       \* **Sec. 4.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
12 read:

13               STUDY; REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE. The welcoming Alaska office  
14 established under AS 23.05.131 shall conduct a study to determine immigration opportunities  
15 in the state, establish goals for the welcoming Alaska office, and develop performance  
16 indicators to measure progress for the welcoming Alaska office. The study must include input  
17 from employers in the state. The welcoming Alaska office shall prepare a report explaining  
18 the findings from the study and submit the report by July 1, 2027, to the senate secretary and  
19 the chief clerk of the house of representatives and notify the legislature that the report is  
20 available.

21       \* **Sec. 5.** This Act takes effect July 1, 2026.