

March 6, 2023

Chair Bobby Joe Champion  
Senate Jobs and Economic Development Committee  
1100 Minnesota Senate Building  
95 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55103

Chair Champion and members:

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans (the Council) submits this letter on S.F. 360, offered by Senator Z. Mohamed, to establish the Office of New Americans (ONA) within the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

The Council is charged by the Legislature with the statutory duties of advocating on behalf of Minnesota's Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities, acting as the liaison between state government and Minnesota's API communities, and serving as an advisory body to the Legislature and the Governor. It is in this capacity that we offer the following suggestions to improve S.F. 360.

As one of the state's three ethnic councils, the Council is privileged to be active within our immigrant and refugee communities. The Council supports increased efforts by the state to improve its ability to empower new Minnesotans to become economically self-sufficient—and in this regard, supports the establishment of the ONA. However, the Council is concerned that S.F. 360, as introduced, does not clearly define the scope and role of the proposed ONA and duplicates functions already performed by the state's ethnic councils.

The Council suggests that the language of S.F. 360 be updated to reflect that of the DE2 Amendment of its House companion, H.F. 330. Specifically, this updated language would clarify the duties of the ONA in the context of workforce access and workforce readiness; require the ONA to collaborate with, consult, and solicit input from the ethnic councils; and add the ethnic councils to the Interdepartmental Coordinating Council on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs proposed in Subdivision 4. The language in the DE2 amendment to H.F. 330 was created through a consultation process between the ethnic councils, DEED, and municipal offices.

We thank you for your consideration of our Council's suggestions to improve this bill. We believe that with the proper amendments, the ONA can help ensure immigrants and refugees receive the proper support they need to thrive in their new communities.

Sincerely,



Andrew Morris  
Legislative and Public Affairs Liaison  
[Andrew.Morris@state.mn.us](mailto:Andrew.Morris@state.mn.us)