

Governor O'Malley Establishes Maryland Council for New Americans

Executive Order Establishes Council to Promote Full Immigrant Integration into Economic and Civic Life of Maryland;

Montgomery County Executive to Chair Statewide Council

ANNAPOLIS, MD (December 5, 2008) – Governor Martin O'Malley today signed an Executive Order that establishes the Maryland Council for New Americans. Executive Order 01.01.2008.18 rescinds Executive Order 01.01.1996.18, signed in 1996 by then Governor Parris Glendening, and creates a new Council for New Americans to promote full immigrant integration into the economic and civic life of Maryland. Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett and Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation Secretary Tom Perez were named as Co-Chairs to the statewide Council.

“Maryland faces chronic labor shortages in a number of critical industries and immigrants living and working in Maryland are a vital component of Maryland’s economic engine, Maryland’s tax base, and Maryland’s social and cultural fabric,” said Governor O’Malley. “Immigrants’ access to mainstream financial services helps ensure the economic health of our state and promotes the full-fledged participation of immigrants in community life. Creating a proactive policy for New Americans in Maryland within a fair and legal framework will ensure that workers get the protection they deserve, while increasing Maryland’s economic competitiveness.”

“The Federal Government has failed to enact meaningful, comprehensive immigration reform and has placed significant pressure upon state and local governments,” added Governor O’Malley. “This Executive Order is a proactive step in ensuring that New Americans in Maryland have a meaningful opportunity to succeed.”

“Maryland is a richly diverse state and Maryland’s immigrants have contributed mightily to our success and will continue to do so,” said Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett. “This effort will lend a helping hand to integrate immigrants into the fabric of the Maryland of the 21st century.”

“Maryland has one of the nation’s most highly educated immigrant populations, but too often barriers keep them from contributing everything they can to our social and economic fabric. All too often foreign trained doctors and engineers are underemployed, not realizing the best use of their talents,” Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation Secretary Tom Perez said. “Maryland’s immigrant community has a wealth of skills and knowledge that, when tapped, can help us diminish workforce shortages in health care fields and other areas. With this executive

order, Governor O'Malley is recognizing the importance of helping immigrants realize their full potential in our country, and the critical contributions they can make to our state."

The Council for new Americans will consist of a partnership between public, private and civic sectors in Maryland and is charged with:

- Reviewing and recommending new policies and practices to expedite immigrant integration into the economic and civic life of the State;
- Providing a Maryland Council for New Americans Report and Recommendations no later than nine months after the date of this Order; and
- Performing any other duties that may be requested by the Governor.

The Council will also establish four working groups to make recommendations to the Council to address specific challenges facing immigrants. The working groups include:

- **The Workforce Working Group**, which will focus on helping to address the State's workforce shortage by examining credential transfer, training, and the attraction of key workers to create the region's most competitive workforce; examining the role of "One Stop" employment centers in streamlining the economic integration of new Americans; and identifying best practices that expedite English as a Second Language, both for children in the public school system and for working adults.
- **The Citizenship Working Group**, which will plan a broad, coordinated citizenship promotion and assistance program to naturalize Maryland's legal permanent residents at a faster pace.
- **The Governmental Access Working Group**, which will focus on how to improve accessibility of State and local government services to new Americans. This will include an assessment of resources necessary for compliance with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) requirements; an assessment of the availability of vital documents in other languages; and identifying best practices at the county, community and municipal levels. This group is also charged with developing specific government-wide StateStat measures to track capacity to serve these communities; and
- **The Financial Services Working Group**, which will examine strategies for increasing immigrants' access to mainstream financial services, stable homeownership, and family financial planning.

The Executive Order also renamed the Maryland Office for New Americans to the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees, and will remain an office under the Department of Human Resources. The purpose of the office is to administer Maryland's federally-funded Refugee Resettlement Program.

Eighteen percent of Federal, State and local taxes paid by Marylanders come from immigrant households. Forty-three percent of immigrants working in Maryland have a college degree or higher, and one in five doctors and one in four scientists in Maryland are immigrants.