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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2368**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** House Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning (originally sponsored by Representatives Gregerson, Eslick, Thai, Low, Senn, Leavitt, Davis, Farivar, Nance, Reed, Doglio, Ramel, Simmons, Ormsby, Street, Goodman, Timmons, Pollet, and Santos)

AN ACT Relating to assisting refugees and immigrants by describing the role of the office of refugee and immigrant assistance within the department of social and health services in administering federal funding regarding refugee support services and authorizing the office of refugee and immigrant assistance within the department of social and health services to administer services to immigrants; and adding a new chapter to Title 74 RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The purpose of this chapter is to establish the scope of refugee and immigrant assistance administered by the office of refugee and immigrant assistance within the department.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Department" means the department of social and health services.

(2) "Federal act" means Title IV of the federal immigration and nationality act, 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1521 et seq. as amended, including any federal rules adopted pursuant to the federal act.

(3) "Immigrant" means a person who has arrived in the United States and the state of Washington from another country seeking residence who is not a naturalized citizen.

(4) "Refugee" means a person admitted into the United States under section 207 of the immigration and nationality act and others who are eligible for federal refugee resettlement services under the federal act.

(5) "State plan" means the Washington state plan for refugee resettlement described in section 4 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The department shall coordinate statewide efforts to support the economic and social integration and basic needs of immigrants and refugees arriving and resettling in Washington. The department shall coordinate with local, state, and federal government agencies and other stakeholders.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The department is designated as the lead state agency responsible for the development, review, and administration of the Washington state plan for refugee resettlement. The department shall submit the state plan to and seek approval from the federal office of refugee resettlement within the federal department of health and human services according to the federal act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The department shall provide refugee cash assistance, refugee medical assistance, and refugee support services in accordance with the federal act and the state plan.

(2) The refugee support services described in this section may include:

(a) Employment services;

(b) English language instruction;

(c) Case management; and

(d) Other services or assistance consistent with the federal act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The department may administer services to immigrants who are ineligible for federal services described in section 5 of this act.

(2) The department may contract with external entities, including community-based organizations, to provide the services authorized under this section. In contracting with community-based organizations, the department must engage communities impacted to determine an equitable funding distribution and contracting process.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The department may adopt rules in order to achieve the purposes of this chapter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 1 through 7 of this act constitute a new chapter in Title 74 RCW.

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