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**Human Services, Youth, & Early  
Learning Committee**

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**HB 2368**

**Brief Description:** Assisting refugees and immigrants.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Gregerson, Eslick, Thai, Low, Senn, Leavitt, Davis, Farivar, Nance, Reed, Doglio, Ramel, Simmons, Ormsby, Street, Goodman, Timmons, Pollet and Santos.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to coordinate state, federal, and local efforts to support the economic and social integration of immigrants and refugees arriving and resettling in Washington.
- Authorizes the DSHS to administer services to immigrants who are ineligible for federally funded services.

**Hearing Date:** 1/24/24

**Staff:** Luke Wickham

**Background:**

*Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance.*

The Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) within the Department of Social and Health Services administers federally funded programs that provide support to eligible individuals including employment preparation and training, health and wellness supports (including a Refugee Medical Assistance program and a Refugee Health Promotion Program), immigration assistance and naturalization services, whole family services, job placement, English language training, and Refugee Cash Assistance.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

The three largest programs administered by ORIA include:

- the Limited English Proficiency Pathway Employment and English Language Training Program,
- naturalization services; and
- the Promoting Refugee Integration, Mobility and Empowerment Program (which provides case management, education, and immigration-related legal services).

Immigrants who entered the United States with one of the following statuses or were granted one them after entry may receive refugee resettlement services:

- refugees;
- asylees;
- certain Amerasians;
- Cuban-Haitian entrants;
- certified victims of trafficking and their eligible family members; and
- Special Immigrant Visa holders from Iraq or Afghanistan and their eligible family members.

For purposes of programs administered by ORIA, a refugee is an individual granted refugee status overseas by the United States Department of Homeland Security because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion and unable or unwilling to return to their home country.

Some refugees are eligible to apply for general federal assistance programs, such as cash assistance through Supplemental Security Income or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), health insurance through Medicaid, and food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

### **Summary of Bill:**

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to coordinate state, federal, and local efforts to support the economic and social integration of immigrants and refugees arriving and resettling in Washington.

The DSHS is designated as the single state agency responsible for the development, review, and administration of the Washington State Plan for Refugee Resettlement (State Plan). The DSHS must submit the State Plan to, and seek approval from, the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement within the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

The DSHS must provide refugee cash assistance, refugee medical assistance, and refugee support services according to the State Plan. These services may include:

- employment services;
- English language instruction;

- case management; and
- other services or assistance consistent with federal law.

The DSHS is authorized to administer services to immigrants who are ineligible for federally funded services. The DSHS may contract with external entities, including community-based organizations, to provide services to immigrants who are ineligible for federally funded services. An "immigrant" is defined as 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.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 17, 2024.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.