

# Ohio House of Representatives



## **State Representative Bernadine Kennedy Kent**

Sponsor Testimony

House Bill 624

Good morning Chairman Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley and Ranking Member Holmes. I am both honored and excited to have the privilege to speak before you this morning. I will be brief as House Bill 624 is a short, simple piece of legislation that seeks to be a corrective measure to Ohio Revised Code 4112.31.

The New African Immigrant Commission was formed through Sub-House Bill 500 of the 127<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. It took eight years for commissioners to be appointed and the commission to begin functioning. As the Commission pursued every aspect of the duties in creating its bylaws, the language of the law that permitted the receipt of grants and gifts seemed immediately feasible and they were advised to request the Treasurer's Office to open an account. However, that was not possible as representatives from both the Ohio Treasurer's Office and the Office of Budget Management concluded that they could do nothing except by a legislative correction.

Language in the legislation dictates that the commission cannot receive state funding. However, it also says that the commission can accept grants and gifts from other entities. When commissions are formed, here in Ohio, they are usually given funds from the state, thus prompting an "account", or line-item number, in the custody of the Treasurer of State to be

opened for said commission. For the fact that the commission was to receive no state funding, the account was not opened and now they have nowhere to store the grants and gifts that section 4112.31 (K) states that they are entitled to receive.

Dr. Rosaire Ifedi, New African Immigrants Commission Chair, received a final reply by Sharon Hanrahan, of the Office of Budget Management that read in part; *“Division (K) of section 4112.31 of the Revised Code permits the commission to apply for and accept gifts and grants from governmental and private sources, yet provides no mechanism for the establishment of a depository vehicle either in the state treasury or held in the custody of the Treasurer of State. In essence, the commission was created to do wonderful things, but was not granted the legal authority to fully execute all of them.”*

Colleagues, this is a straight forward piece of legislation that allows the New African Immigrants Commission to have a place to simply store their funds. Let us correct this oversight so the commission can do the work they were appointed to do.

Thank you again for your time Chairman Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes and committee members. I am happy to take any questions that you may have.