



New African Immigrants Commission

Advocacy. Access. Self-Sufficiency.

Office: Suite 1870, Vern Riffe Building; Phone: 614.728.7578; Website: www.naic.ohio.gov; Email: naic@ohio.gov

June 7, 2018

To: Rep. Marlene Anielski, Chair, State and Local Government Committee

From: Dr. Rosaire Ifedi, New African Immigrants Commission

Subject: Testimony in support of HB 624: NAIC Grants and Gifts Fund

I want to thank you, Madame Chair, for this opportunity to be a proponent witness and provide testimony in support of the New African Immigrants Commission (NAIC) Grants and Gifts Fund. On behalf of the NAIC, I express our gratitude in allowing this hearing to proceed expeditiously. I offer some cogent reasons that explain the necessity for HB 624 and a bit of history on the NAIC.

1. HB 624 is being offered to correct and make functional some parts of ORC 4112.31, the Ohio law that establishes the New African Immigrants Commission in the first place.

While there are sixteen specific tasks outlined in 4112.31, "Duties of the New African Immigrants Commission" and listed as Sections A –P, three of them more directly speak to the issue of how the Commission can receive and utilize funds as follows:

(H) Review and approve grants to be made from federal, state, or private funds that are administered or subcontracted by the commission;

(I) Prepare, review, and approve an annual report;

(K) Apply for and accept grants and gifts from governmental and private sources to be administered by the commission or subcontracted to local agencies;

However, there is currently no language in the statutes to cover the creation of a bank account to put revenues in nor the authority to spend it. It is our hope, therefore, that HB 624 allows for the creation of such said account so that the NAIC can receive and administer revenue from private and government entities as stated in 4112.31., Section K.

2. The State Treasurer's Office and the Ohio Office of Budget and Management have advised that a legislative action is required that gives them the necessary legal authority to open such an account. HB 624 simply offers the solution of opening an account for depositing and administering grants and gifts for NAIC.

After multiple reviews of the situation conducted by at least six different personnel in the State Treasurer's Office and the Office of Budget and Management (including Jennifer Day and Sharon Hanrahan, Chief, OBM – General Government Section, respectively), the decision was communicated to me as the Chair of the NAIC that legal authorization would be needed to open an account for grants and gifts for the NAIC. In an e-mail response to me, Sharon Hanrahan stated:

“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. . . . I have cc'd our Chief Legal Counsel who may weigh in. From my perspective, you will need legal authority; that is, legislation, that will legally permit the commission to establish an “account.” Neither OBM nor the Treasurer's Office can introduce new legislation or amend existing legislation that would grant the commission the necessary legal authority.”

3. HB 624 would make right and complete 4112.31 and therefore facilitate the work of the New African Immigrants Commission.

It took eight years to see the New African Immigrants Commission (NAIC) come to light after having been legislated in 2008/09. Nonetheless, more than ever, the need for the work of the NAIC looms large with the increasing number of legal immigrants and refugees from the Continent of Africa who have made the great State of Ohio their home. Yet, no funding has been made available to the Commission. In making Section K of 4112.31 functional, the NAIC would be able to fund at least some programs and its immediate administrative duties. NAIC has conducted listening tours in Dayton and is planning subsequent ones in Cincinnati and Cleveland. We have activated five standing committees consisting of members from various Ohio counties and representing at least 12 African countries thus far. The work of NAIC will be greatly facilitated by the passage of HB 624 so that the Commission can implement its statutory mandates.

I thank you, Madam Chair and the State and Local Government Committee, for taking time to listen to my testimony as well as others in support of HB 624. We are equally grateful to Rep. Bernadine Kent for introducing HB 624 and her advocacy in seeing the very important work of the New African Immigrants Commission implemented. On behalf of the NAIC, the other Commissioners and all involved stakeholders, I sincerely thank you for enabling the NAIC Commission fulfill the expectations for which it was created in the first place. I will be available to answer any further questions or provide more information as needed. Thank you very much.

Submitted by Rosaire Ifedi, ED.D., Chair, New African Immigrants Commission

The mission of the New African Immigrants Commission is to advocate for the self-sufficiency of sub-Saharan African people in Ohio.

2017-2018 1st Board of Commissioners:

*Dr. Rosaire Ifedi, Chair ~ Comfort Kenneh, Vice Chair ~ Ibrahima Sow, Recorder
Eugenie Kirenga ~ Abass Bangura ~ Tariq Mohamed ~ Mariame Diabate*