

Senate Finance Committee,  
Ohio Senate  
October 4, 2021

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

**RE: SB 184**

My name is Kefa M. Otiso, PhD. I am a Commissioner on the Ohio New African Immigrants Commission (NAIC) and a Professor at Bowling Green State University in Wood county.

Our [SB 148](#) will go through a second hearing tomorrow Tuesday, October 5, 2021. I am writing to urge you to kindly to support this much-needed bill.

According to the 2019 US Census data, Ohio has an estimated 76,615 African immigrants scattered across 65 of its 88 counties. Most of them live in Franklin, Hamilton, Cuyahoga, Montgomery, and Butler County.

According to our commission's [2019 Annual Report](#), "African immigrants in the U.S. are twice as likely (57%) to be enrolled in college or graduate school compared to the general U.S. population whose rate is only 27%. Consequently, these immigrants are more likely to have undergraduate and graduate degrees than the general U.S. population." African immigrants in Ohio are well represented in the state's education, medical, and other professional fields. They thus help to keep Ohio economically competitive. Some of these professionals, more so those in the medical profession, are also playing a critical role in meeting the health needs of Ohio's underserved rural and urban areas.

With estimated personal median income of \$41,182 in 2017, Ohio's 76,615 African immigrants had an estimated economic impact of \$3.2 billion on the State. The economic impact of these immigrants will continue to increase as their numbers continue to grow.

Considering this reality, the Legislature established the New African Immigrants Commission in 2008 (ORC 4112.31, ORC 4112.32). But because the Commission has never been funded, it has not been able to discharge its legal mandate of enabling the State's African immigrant population to maximize its potential of contributing to the State's economy. Therefore, I urge you to support SB 184.

I look forward to your positive response to this bill. I would be happy to chat with you about it if needed.

Sincerely,  
Kefa M. Otiso  
Commissioner, Ohio New African Immigrants Commission (NAIC)  
Professor, Bowling Green State University