STATE OF NEW YORK

9520

IN ASSEMBLY

March 16, 2022

Introduced by M. of A. SAYEGH -- read once and referred to the Committee on Governmental Operations

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to establishing that it is an unlawful discriminatory practice to deny a refugee resettlement in certain instances

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature hereby finds and declares all of the following:

a. Under federal law, a refugee is a person who is forced to flee their country of origin due to persecution, or a well-founded fear of persecution, based upon their religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion;

b. At the end of 2020, there were 82.4 million forcibly displaced people in the world, 25.9 million of which were refugees. This is double the recorded number in 2010, and the highest it has ever been;

c. Recognizing the importance of refugee resettlement, the United States created the Refugee Act of 1980;

d. Since 1980, the United States Refugee Resettlement program has saved more than 3.6 million refugees, and resettled them across the country;

e. New York was one of the top four states in the country resettling the most refugees in 2020;

f. On September 19, 2016, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which reaffirms the importance of the international refugee regime and contains a wide range of commitments to strengthen and enhance mechanisms to protect these individuals;

g. Research from reputable sources including the Fiscal Policy Institute, Urban Institute, Pew Research Center, and New American Economy find a positive economic and social impact of refugees across New York State;

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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h. Governor Kathy Hochul reaffirmed New York State's commitment to helping refugees on August 19, 2021 by welcoming those fleeing Afghanistan;

i. The Statue of Liberty, a national monument and icon of freedom that has been welcoming immigrants from across the world to New York State since 1886, states, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

§ 2. The executive law is amended by adding a new section 296-e to read as follows:

§ 296-e. Unlawful discriminatory practices relating to refugees. It shall be an unlawful discriminatory practice for the state, or any agency or bureau thereof, or for any other entity to deny a refugee resettlement anywhere within the state based on any criterion, method of administration, or practice that has the purpose or effect of discriminating on the basis of age, race, creed, color, national origin, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, military status, familial status, predisposing genetic characteristics, disability, marital status, or status as a victim of domestic violence.

§ 3. This act shall take effect immediately.