§ 94-b. Office for new Americans. 1. Legislative intent. The legislature hereby finds and declares that, according to the 2010 census, approximately twenty-two percent of New Yorkers were not born in the United States, nine percent above the national average. For years immigrants have come to the United States to make a better life for themselves. It is of utmost importance to the state that these new Americans be given the tools to assist them in making a better life for themselves, particularly through programs that help develop and leverage their skills and strengthen their connections with their communities and through programs to reduce exploitation of vulnerable immigrant populations.

2. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the terms "new American" and "immigrant" shall refer to non-citizen domicilaries of New York state whose country of origin is other than the United States.

3. Office for new Americans; director. There is hereby created within the department of state the office for new Americans. The secretary shall appoint a director of the office to accomplish the responsibilities set forth in this section. Such director shall receive an annual salary within amounts appropriated and shall serve at the pleasure of the secretary.

4. Organization of the office for new Americans. The secretary shall have the power to establish, consolidate, reorganize, or abolish any organizational units within the office as he or she determines to be necessary for efficient operation thereof. The secretary shall assign functions to any such unit and may appoint staff, agents, and consultants, prescribe their duties, and fix their compensation within amounts appropriated.

5. Powers and duties of the office for new Americans. The office for new Americans shall have the power and responsibility to:

(a) Create a network of neighborhood-based opportunity centers;

(b) Increase access to English-for-speakers-of-other-languages (ESOL) training, including by engaging not-for-profit organizations and other qualified providers of ESOL training services;

(c) Assist immigrants in matters relating to immigration status, including but not limited to assisting with the naturalization process and applications for deferred action for childhood arrivals;

(d) Connect immigrants to business resources that harness their skills, employment referral programs, and other workforce development programs;

(e) Develop and leverage the skills of immigrants to benefit their communities and the state;

(f) Strengthen the connections between immigrants and their communities through civic engagement;

(g) Reduce exploitation of immigrants;

(h) Establish a toll-free multi-lingual hotline and a website for purposes including but not limited to dissemination of information about the programs and services offered by the office for new Americans, referral for services, and receipt of complaints relating to fraud and other related crimes against immigrants;

(i) Ensure that individuals referred by the office are directed to service providers who are in compliance with article twenty-eight-C of the general business law or providers certified by the bureau of immigration appeals;

(j) Using information developed by the office through the hotline, assist law enforcement in combatting crimes against immigrants;

(k) Advise the governor and secretary concerning matters affecting immigrants in the state in order to promote and encourage the full participation of immigrants in the state's civic and economic life;

(l) Coordinate with other state agencies and otherwise marshal the resources of the state to serve the needs of immigrants;

(m) Encourage and assist local governments in the development of activities to enhance civic engagement among immigrants and in immigrant communities;

(n) Beginning in two thousand fifteen, by June fifteenth of each year, produce a report to the governor, the speaker of the assembly, and the temporary president of the senate describing the activities of the office, including but not limited to, summarizing calls received through the hotline and website, information on ESOL training services provided by the office, the number of immigrants assisted through the opportunity centers, or an estimation thereof, the status of any workforce

development programs, and any other relevant information;

(o) Encourage the development of and provide for the establishment of a state military immigrant family legacy program liaison, as provided in section twenty-nine-b of the veterans' services law; and

(p) Request individuals seeking assistance from the office answer the following questions: "Have you served in the United States military?" "Has someone in your family served in the United States military?" Individuals identifying themselves or a family member as "intended recipients" of the staff sergeant Alex R. Jimenez New York state military immigrant family legacy program as such term is defined in paragraph (e) of subdivision one of section twenty-nine-b of the veterans' services law, shall be advised of such program. In addition, such individuals shall be informed that the department of veterans' services and local veterans' service agencies established pursuant to section seventeen of the veterans' services law provide assistance to uniformed service members, veterans and their families regarding benefits available under federal and state law. Information regarding veterans and military status provided by assisted individuals shall be protected as personal confidential material, and used only to identify such individuals as "intended recipients" of the staff sergeant Alex R. Jimenez New York State military immigrant family legacy program, and to assist such individuals in matters relating to immigration status and citizenship, and in referring such individuals to the department of veterans' services or local veterans' service agencies for information and assistance with regard to benefits and entitlements under federal and state law.