



Ronald C. Todd II
Social Impact and Opportunity Division
Ohio Department of Development
Ohio Sunset Review Committee
May 7, 2024

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair Hillyer, and members of the Sunset Review Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the New African Immigrants Commission. My name is Ronald Todd and I am Chief of Social Impact and Opportunity at the Ohio Department of Development.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, approximately 586,000 individuals, or roughly 5% of Ohioans are foreign-born.¹ About 82,000 of those individuals are from the sub-Saharan African region, which includes those from Eastern, Western, Middle, and Southern Africa. This equates to roughly 14% of all foreign-born individuals currently in Ohio.

To better support this community, the New African Immigrants Commission was established. The law also created the Office of the New African Immigrant Affairs to administratively serve the Commission. The Commission received funding to support its work through House Bill 33 of the 134th General Assembly.

The Commission consists of eleven voting members and four nonvoting members, two of whom are members of the General Assembly. According to statute, all voting members of the commission shall be of sub-Saharan African origin, and shall be American citizens or lawful, permanent, resident aliens. Voting members must be from urban, suburban, and rural geographical areas representative of sub-Saharan African people with a numerical and geographical balance of the sub-Saharan African population throughout the state. Members are not compensated for their work on the Commission.

The mission of the New African Immigrants Commission is to ensure the self-sufficiency of sub-Saharan African people in Ohio. The Commission works to accomplish this mission through advocacy, connection, and education.

The advocacy work of the Commission ensures that the sub-Saharan African people in Ohio have a voice on matters that impact their community at both the state and local level. This includes suggesting legislative measures, reviewing bills, examining existing programs, and creating new programs to the benefit of the sub-Saharan African people across the state.

¹ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/OH>



The Commission works to connect sub-Saharan African people with available resources and services to improve their lives through meetings with state and local entities, as well as events such as workshops, festivals, and presentations.

The work of the Commission also serves to positively impact the community and businesses of sub-Saharan African people across the state by providing assistance with grant applications, loans, and other programs. The Commission also seeks to have a positive impact on the sub-Saharan African people in our state by conducting trainings, highlighting successes of the community, and engaging in meaningful partnerships across Ohio.

Education is a major component of the work the Commission engages in, specifically to bolster workforce development within the sub-Saharan African community. Some specific workforce development needs identified by the Commission include:

- Language training programs for general purposes as well as industry specific terminology, such as higher education, health care, and business sector language.
- Diploma and transcript evaluation to determine transferability of foreign earned degrees and certifications.
- Licensure and credentialing navigation for ease of entrance into certain careers, including nursing, teaching, and engineering.
- Career development programs that could provide individuals with the tools and resources needed to attain high-skill jobs.
- Create career mentorship programs to target high school and college students in this community to provide career coaching and leadership opportunities.
- Small business development opportunities to help individuals in this community start businesses and gain access to financing as well as employment and training programs.

Given the important and impactful work done by this Commission, I respectfully ask for the reauthorization of the New African Immigrants Commission.

Thank you for your time and consideration.