



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

## New Law to Protect New Yorkers From Immigration Assistance Fraud

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| ISSUE: **IMMIGRATION**

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo this week signed legislation to better protect immigrants living in New York from potential fraud or wrongdoing as they seek immigration-related assistance. These new New Yorkers will now benefit from stricter assistance-provider requirements, including the addition of a new crime to discourage this type of fraud. This bill also designates the New York State Office for New Americans – which Governor Cuomo launched last year – as a permanent executive office of State government, whose primary purpose is to offer support to the immigrant population. Complementing the legislation signed today, a statewide multilingual public service campaign is in progress to warn newcomers against fraud and encourage them to seek assistance if they feel they are a victim of an immigration-related scam.

The legislation will strengthen protections by enhancing translation requirements, increasing civil penalties for violations of the law, and barring the use of job titles that aim to mislead an assistance-seeker into believing that a service provider is an attorney or otherwise specialized professional when the provider has no such credential. It creates two new crimes, felony and misdemeanor immigration assistance fraud.

Additionally, the bill codifies the Office for New Americans, **launched** by the Governor in March 2013, which provides a range of services to New York's recent immigration population. Just last year, the office **helped over 34,000 people** through neighborhood-based opportunity centers and a toll-free multi-lingual hotline (800-566-7636) offering a variety of services. The Opportunity Centers teach New Americans English, assist them in the process of becoming naturalized U.S. citizens, provide free legal advice so they can start and grow businesses, as well as offer training to community based organizations so that they may offer immigration services. The Office for New Americans is the first state-level immigrant office created by statute in the country.

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