



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

# **Press Release: Senator Stewart-Cousins Announces New Fraud Protections for Immigrants in New York State**

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Yonkers, NY - State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, the Minority Leader, announced today that enhanced fraud protections for immigrants seeking assistance in New York State became law February 2, 2015.

“New York has a proud history of welcoming immigrants and embracing the contributions they make to our communities,” Senator Stewart-Cousins said. “However, there are also some unscrupulous people offering services to help them adjust to life in New York who take their money and provide little to no assistance. My office has worked with constituents who have had this happen to them. This new law ensures there are protections in place for the often vulnerable newcomers to our

country and our state.”

The law creates the crimes of felony and misdemeanor immigration assistance fraud in order to deter service providers from taking advantage of immigrants that seek their help. It also includes provisions to enhance translation requirements, increase civil penalties for violations, and prohibit the use of job titles used to mislead immigrants to believe that a provider is a specialized professional or attorney, when the provider is not certified.

The law also establishes the New York State Office for New Americans (NYSONA) as a permanent executive office of State government. The Office for New Americans is the first state-level immigrant office created by statute in the country according to the Governor’s Office. Additionally, the measure includes an outreach campaign to raise fraud awareness and awards NYSONA permanent status. NYSONA provides immigration assistance at community outreach centers, teaches new New Yorkers English, aids in the naturalization process, and provides immigrants with free legal advice.

“When immigrants come to New York they need assurance that service providers are there to help them on their path to citizenship and success, not take advantage of them,” Senator Stewart-Cousins concluded. “I commend Governor Cuomo and the Legislature for taking action to ensure that immigrants are welcomed with respect and get the valuable services they deserve as new New Yorkers.”

Constituents are welcome to contact the Senator's District Office at 914-423-4031 for assistance or to call a toll-free multilingual hotline at 800-566-7636.