Testimony of Joby Thoyalil, Maine Business Immigration Coalition
Neither For Nor Against **LD 1050, Resolve, Directing the Department of**
Labor to Request a Federal Waiver to Allow Presumptive Work
Eligibility for Asylum Seekers

March 21, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the joint standing committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Joby Thoyalil and I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Business Immigration Coalition (MeBIC) *neither for nor against* LD 1050.

MeBIC is Maine's only resource dedicated to providing information, education and advocacy on immigration and related issues from and for the business and economic perspective. We know that immigrants are part of the solution to Maine's short- and long-term workforce shortages. Most people seeking asylum bring education, skills, and expertise with them and are able and eager to work. Unfortunately they must wait for at least six months before they are federally authorized to do so.

For this reason, we very much support the intent behind LD 1050, but we cannot support it due to the fact that federal immigration law does not allow for the type of waiver for which this resolve calls. I have consulted with MeBIC's founder, Beth Stickney, who is an immigration attorney and a longtime expert on immigration law about this. It is clear that there isn't any language in the federal Immigration and Nationality Act that allows for a waiver of this kind, as much as we wish there were.

That said, we do think it's good for state leaders to be speaking out on this issue. Congress needs to hear from political leaders from states across the country that our current immigration laws do not meet our economic or human needs. While there is nothing that the federal executive branch can do under federal law about work authorization for asylum seekers, if the Committee decides to move forward with this resolve, we recommend amending it to request that Congress take legislative action.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important issue.