

Testimony on LD 2167: An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans

Xavier Botana, Advocacy Advisor [IntWork](#)

Honorable Chairs: Senator Nangle and Representative Stover and distinguished members of the Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Xavier Botana. I am the advocacy adviser for IntWork, a search firm located in Westbrook that helps Maine companies diversify their workforce by connecting them with qualified diverse individuals who want to live and work in Maine. IntWork is committed to discovering hidden immigrant talent and developing pipelines for refugees and asylum seekers to return to their careers in the U.S through licensure, internships, and full-time career placements.

I also am the co-founder and current president of a new Maine-based non-profit organization, IntWork Credentialing Connections, that will work to support those immigrants in building and establishing their credentials so that they can pursue their dreams to realize their full potential. I am a forty year educator who until last year served as the superintendent of the Portland Public Schools, Maine's largest and most diverse school district.

I am here to express IntWork's support for LD 2167. Maine's talent gap is one of the most significant barriers to its economic development. As a state, we understand the value of a diverse workforce, we struggle to find diverse talent to strengthen our workforce. But, as LD 2167 recognizes, a pool of talented and diverse candidates are already in our midst.

Maine has taken important steps already to recognize and support the value and potential of the rich immigrant population that is looking to make Maine home. Whether it's through our school districts, the growing number of community based organizations serving immigrants or the state's network of social services, there are many working to maximize this potential.

Missing from this tableau of support is a strong, visible and accountable coordinating force. That is what the creation of an Office of New Americans promises to achieve. As proposed, by effectively coordinating existing resources, building an understanding of best practices, collecting timely data, expanding English learning opportunities and creating pathways for productive employment we will have a structure devoted to making the most of our new residents' potential.

I was born in Cuba. My family came as refugees to the US when I was three years old. When we arrived in Chicago, the public/private support system was in place to ensure that my parents, both college educated, were able to find pathways that enabled them, and subsequently my brothers and I to realize our potential. I believe that this investment in us has been returned many times over since then. I look forward to seeing the establishment of a support structure that is designed to recognize the needs and potential of our current immigrants.

IntWork and ICC look forward to supporting the Office of New Americans' efforts.