

Laurinda Cartier
Bangor, Maine
LD 783

Dear Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

My name is Laurinda (Laurie) Cartier and I live in Bangor, Maine. I am writing regarding LD 783 "An Act to Continue Support for the Maine Multicultural Center." I have been involved with the Maine Multicultural Center as a volunteer refugee advocate for the past two years, and before that I attended many of their educational programs put on either in person or over Zoom. I hope that you will agree that maintaining the paid positions this bill will cover is essential to assuring that the Maine Multicultural Center is able to continue its excellent services to this community.

As more and more immigrants have come to Bangor, the Maine Multicultural Center has become one of their main lifelines in the area. From organizing with Catholic Charities for the welcome of these new Mainers, to making sure they have a furnished place to live, the essentials for a household, a volunteer team to help them navigate what is usually a very new and scary situation, and providing the assistance to the volunteers who make up the organization, the staff at MMCC is right there at every turn. They keep volunteers and clients notified of everything from what is happening in the area to essential procedures that might be needed in emergencies. They keep track of volunteer hours so that funding sources know how impactful the organization is. And they organize educational programs for the general public to keep us all informed about our new neighbors and the issues they face or have faced in their transition to becoming productive citizens in the area.

I have benefitted from the efficient organization that MMCC has become. Helping "my" refugee family would not have been possible without their support and guidance. We have regular opportunities to come together as volunteers and benefit from information that is shared. I believe the organization's workforce works incredibly well together and if one or more were no longer there, it would be a huge burden to the others as they try to navigate everything that needs to be done. We may not have new immigrants coming to Bangor in the numbers they were before, but we still have many who are here now and need assistance with all that MMCC supports. There are still volunteers who need their support. They still have a need to be ready as soon as immigration is opened up again. AND they still have a wide community of people in the Bangor area who are able to take advantage of their educational programs.

Please continue the funding for MMCC by voting Yes on LD 783.