

My name is Connie McVey and I live in Bangor. I am giving testimony to the importance of the services provided by the Maine Multicultural Center (MMC) and I am asking that you vote in support of LD783 put forth by State Senator Mike Tipping for the continuation of funding of the MMC Program Manager position for another 2 years. I am a licensed clinical social worker, fluent in Spanish, and an active volunteer with the Maine Multicultural Center.

As a Maine Multicultural Center volunteer, I am a support person for 3 newly immigrated/asylum seeking families from Spanish speaking countries. The MMC Program manager interviewed and oriented me, gave me reassurance of support and guidance—and then I was provided high quality, thorough training, learning about cultural sensitivity, immigration, resources and much more. All of this support has been integral in my success and continuance as a MMC volunteer. The Program manager position is crucial, as they are the one organizing all of the trainings, volunteer support meetings, the volunteer –family matchings, getting up to date information and resources to the families and us volunteers, and more.

The adult immigrants I assist, fled their countries due to extreme circumstances, and they came to this area not knowing anyone and not knowing English. The MMC Program manager, staff and me as a volunteer helped them register their children in school, and helped them all secure full time jobs--as janitors in our local school systems, in a hospital and 2 work in construction companies. They all have working papers and they are all starting to study English, due to the MMC manager, staff and volunteers connecting them with the resources.

The families MMC service are hard working people who are contributing to our local community, working in jobs that have had openings for a while, jobs that many Mainers would not want. They are not only actively contributing to our community but also integrating into our community in positive ways—and this is because of the support they have been given by MMC staff and volunteers. They have attended church and community social events with me and this has enriched everyone involved. Their children attend our local public schools and their presence enriches the school community, via diversity, language and culture. We live in a world that is increasingly global; therefore, bringing immigrants from all over the world into Maine enriches and strengthens our communities, not weakens them. Many of our Maine children will never travel abroad to meet people of different cultures, who speak different languages. Having a more diverse school population, with immigrants from all over the world. allows our children to expand their knowledge, their understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures. These experiences may inspire them to travel abroad someday. Our children learn that while there are many differences between people of diverse nationalities, there are more similarities among them than they could even imagine.

Moreover, as you likely know, studies have found that immigrants, whether here legally or not, commit fewer crimes than native born residents. Our government is now diverting limited resources to search out and deport immigrants, and increasing by billions, money spent on enhanced border control. This is wasteful, cruel and unnecessary. Maine State Legislators, I implore you to create and vote for legislation that protect and support our Maine immigrants, legislation that points out the values of our immigrants in our communities, legislation that supports continued immigrants coming to Maine to work, to raise their families.

And this includes the legislation brought forth by State Senator Mike Tipping to extend funding for the Maine Multicultural Center Program Manager for another 2 years. This funding is critical for MMC to survive. Without a Program Manager, MMC will diminish in its ability to recruit, train and sustain volunteers, therefore the Center will likely flounder and collapse—resulting in removing crucial support needed by our immigrants to get started in their goal to have a safe and secure life for their families and be productive and contributing members of our Maine communities.

Maine Legislators, your mandate is to listen to, advocate and legislate on behalf of your Maine constituents. Thank you very much for listening to me and for your serious consideration of my testimony in support of LD783 put forth today, to continue funding for the Program Manager position of the MMC for 2 more years.

Respectfully submitted by Connie McVey, Bangor, Maine 4/1/25

