

Written testimony in favor of LD 783 “An Act to Continue Support for the Maine Multicultural Center”

As a Bangor Adult Education teacher of English for Speakers of Other Languages I have worked with students from many backgrounds from other countries for over 30 years. I saw them try to navigate transportation, medical appointments, housing needs, employment and paperwork all while speaking and reading with limited English.

I often tried to troubleshoot within the limited time frame I had with them while teaching English classes with multiple students while working 2-3 days a week.

Once the Maine Multicultural Center (MMCC) came upon the scene, my students had increased support to help them navigate daily life tasks facing an immigrant in the Bangor area. Now, they have a support team of volunteers to drive them to classes and appointments. MMCC volunteers and staff help them directly with paperwork for employment, housing forms grocery shopping, and government appointments (often in Portland). Volunteers help out with childcare as well.

I personally have served and continue to serve directly on a few different committees since 2018.

First, we have the Education Committee to reach out to the general public to better inform them of who we work with and how to better interact with a foreign-born population through teacher workshops, Community Forums, and small group cultural presentations.

Next, I work doing move-ins where we set up a home for new immigrant families. We rent storage space to collect household furnishings and a truck to deliver the furniture and houseware with volunteer movers who assemble furniture and clean the apartment before stocking the kitchen and bathroom.

Most importantly, I am part of a Support Team of 3 that assists a refugee family of 6. We took them to Walmart for food, clothes, and haircuts. We took them to the Mosque for worship services and to government offices for important meetings. We visited the post office to mail official forms. After living in a refugee camp for many years, they had to catch up on their shots, dental care, and medical care for serious ailments. During this time, they studied English and some of them worked or went to school full time. Gradually, they learned to drive in Maine, obtained a license and bought a van.

Without the help and support of MMCC this family would have missed many important deadlines and appointments. The bus runs close to their house, but it is cumbersome, especially for those with health issues.

I am happy to report that after 1 year in Maine, they are self-sufficient. Thanks to the support team accompaniment, they know their way around Bangor, support their son's soccer team and attend school and government meetings on time.

By supporting Maine MultiCultural Center, immigrant workers will be welcomed to Maine to help address labor shortages, start their own businesses and add to the culture of Maine. Legislative funding will keep our knowledgeable staff employed helping New Mainers.

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Winterport, ME