



# Maine MultiCultural Center

April 1, 2025

RE: LD 783: An Act to Continue Support for the Maine Multicultural Center

Dear honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

The Maine Multicultural Center's Board of Directors unanimously and unequivocally supports LD 783, "An Act to Continue Support for the Maine Multicultural Center." This Bill will ensure that the Maine Multicultural Center's vital work continues. MMCC is good for Maine, and our work is good for local communities.

The Maine Multicultural Center was formed partly to address the state's worker crisis. Maine's workforce is aging rapidly, with many retiring and not enough people to replace them. The State's Department of Labor estimated that Maine will need 90,000 new workers during this decade to address its shortfall, an equivalent of 9,000 per year. Maine cannot achieve this goal without immigrants.

Since its inception, the Maine Multicultural Center has worked to further Maine's interests. MMCC provides service to the community in three general categories:

- Refugees are legal migrants resettled in the United States. Through the Refugee Resettlement Program led by Catholic Charities, the MMCC provides a link by helping families navigate the complex dynamics of living in a new country. For example, families arriving from war-torn countries have no more than the clothes on their backs. MMCC solicits donations of clothes and furniture, coordinates volunteers to assist with move-in, and helps the families assimilate to Maine's culture.
- Asylum Seekers are immigrants seeking protection from violence, including gangs, political persecution, and other threats with dire consequences. Like refugees, they have little to nothing. These individuals often seek refuge in democracy. They value freedom and believe in the American dream. Similarly, the MMCC coordinates efforts to help asylees with legal status integrate into the community.
- Voluntary Migrants arrive in the U.S. with work visas and permits and are legally authorized to work. Many volunteer migrants fill positions that Americans have abandoned for better working conditions and pay. The Maine Multicultural Center helps volunteer migrants integrate and provides support as needed.

The immigrant population in Maine has an essential role in filling critical jobs in the state and adding to the rich traditions that Mainers embrace. As the saying goes, “If you want to be a Mainer, welcome to Maine.” An overwhelming majority of immigrants who arrive in Maine come from countries ravaged by war or have fled violence in pursuit of better opportunities in a democratic country. They are happy to integrate into the community and content to call themselves Mainers. Immigrants contribute exponentially to Maine economically, culturally, and socially. According to the report “[Starting Anew: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America](#),” there is compelling evidence that refugees have become an indispensable part of their local communities, revitalizing cities and towns nationwide. Decades of data show that refugees and asylees make significant contributions to and strengthen the U.S. economy, generating a net fiscal benefit of \$123.8 billion to the U.S. government from 2005 to 2019.

LD 783 will allow the MMCC to continue funding two positions vital to meeting Maine’s workforce needs. We ask for your support of LD 783 with profound gratitude as we continue to do the work that moves Maine forward.

Sincerely,

Members of the Board of Directors:

Marwa Hassanien  
Raphael Okutoro  
Chris Linder  
Kim Boucher  
Vicki Rusbult  
Jonathan Falk  
Robert Ford  
Edward French  
Penny Lamhut  
Barbe Miller  
Mary Phillips  
Bill Phillips  
Paul Howe