



CITY OF BANGOR

Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

Testimony in Support of LD 783 – An Act to Continue Support for the Maine Multicultural Center

April 14, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Honorable Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Debbie Laurie and I am the City Manager for the City of Bangor. I am writing in support of LD 783, An Act to Continue Support for the Maine Multicultural Center.

The Maine Multicultural Center was founded, in part, to address a labor shortage in our region. The Maine Department of Labor has predicted a shortage of 90,000 workers over a decade as older Mainers retire and leave the workforce. Even if all the people born in Maine stayed and launched careers here, there still would not be enough new workers to replace those retiring. It became clear that we needed people to migrate to Maine if our economy was to continue to thrive, and that migration is happening. The center is currently working with approximately 200 immigrants, which include 13 single individuals and about 40 families.

The Committee last term passed a bill to provide state funding for the center, and that bill passed in both chambers. State Sen. Michael Tipping has noted that it allowed the center to fund the work of a program manager and two outreach coordinators, and also secure new private and federal funding. They have trained dozens of volunteers who are assigned to new families moving to our area. They assist them in getting jobs, finding housing, pursuing education, navigating a new culture and contributing to our state.

LD 783 would continue that funding for another two years and allow the center to continue its important work. The center has professionalized its operations, sought new sources of ongoing funding, connected with other local organizations to amplify its programs, and have made sure that new families continue to be welcomed and integrated in the Bangor area.

The City of Bangor has shown its commitment to supporting the center by previously directing \$70,700 in ARPA funding to it. The Committee has the opportunity to approve state funding that will allow the center to recruit, train and sustain volunteers who will provide crucial support needed by 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.

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Debbie Laurie, City Manager, debbie.laurie@bangormaine.gov

Cara Pelletier, City Council Chair, cara.pelletier@bangormaine.gov