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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

**Testimony of Senator Richard Bennett
before the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement
and Business**

LD 787, "An Act to Create the New Maine Resident Service Coordination Program in the
Department of Economic and Community Development"

March 21, 2023

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to sponsor LD 787, "An Act to Create the New Maine Resident Service Coordination Program in the Department of Economic and Community Development."

This bill establishes within the Department of Economic and Community Development the New Maine Resident Service Coordination Program, to serve as a centralized resource to coordinate municipal efforts to connect persons who have recently moved to the State with housing and job opportunities.

Over the last few years the State of Maine has seen an influx of asylum seekers seeking support. Finding support has been largely placed on the shoulders of Maine cities and towns where these individuals settle. I believe there should be a position within state government tasked with supporting new residents and the communities they call home.

Right now, municipal officials are working diligently with multiple non-profit entities, state government, and housing organizations to connect new residents with the services they need and qualify for. Housing all this information in one location just makes sense. Doing so may even help to identify redundancies and inefficiencies in the programs currently offered.

Maine's new residents offer the State an opportunity for growth. As the oldest state in the nation, our workforce is shrinking, when businesses need more help than ever before. Connecting our new residents with resources only serves to benefit the future of our state.

I ask for your favorable consideration and thank you for your attention.