

March 21,2023

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping and Representative Roeder and Honorable Members of the of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing.

My name is Kandie Cleaves and I reside in Garland. I am here to testify in favor of **LD 1050 “Resolve, Directing the Department of Labor to Request a Federal Waiver to Allow Presumptive Work Eligibility for Asylum Seekers”**.

I have been involved with multiple organizations doing volunteer work around poverty for over 35 yrs. Approximately 10 yrs. ago I attended a round table meeting that now Senator Ben Chipman invited me to in Portland. At that meeting I listened to many men who were here seeking asylum. They were men who were used to supporting their families, yet after coming here to keep their families safe, they were, in their words, being forced to beg. They were allowed to volunteer, but not allowed to work and receive pay. To meet their needs, they had to ask for help from others. It wasn't what they came here for. That was the first time I learned that we were not allowing them to be employed. Most of society still doesn't realize this. One only needs to look at social media to see all the vile accusations being made about Asylum seekers. Since that time, I have been blessed to meet many wonderful asylum seekers. Just as the men, the women want to be allowed to work. The talents and education so many of them come here with already is desperately needed in our state. We have a shortage of workers, and they have a need to earn money. Denying them that right not only impacts their ability to support their families but impacts their mental wellness and doesn't allow them to teach their children by example.

I do understand the goal that was trying to be accomplished by these restrictions, however I believe it goes far beyond what is beneficial to our country and instead causes unneeded financial impact to both taxpayers and those seeking the safety our country can offer and is creating a hostile environment which is unsafe for all of us. Let Maine lead the way. Let's show that those coming here seeking refuge are contributing members of society, willing to share their talents when allowed to be.

In closing I ask again that you **please pass LD 1050**.

Kandie Cleaves

Garland