



Mike Tipping  
Senator, District 8

**THE MAINE SENATE**  
131st Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

My name is Mike Tipping I represent Senate District 8 in Penobscot County and I'm proud to present **LD 320, An Act to Support the Maine Multicultural Center** This is a concept draft with a suggested amendment that has been provided to the committee and interested parties last week

The Maine Multicultural Center is an amazing group of local volunteers who have taken on the responsibility of integrating new Mainers in our communities in the Bangor area Founded in 2016 and having merged with Welcoming Immigrant Neighbors – Bangor in 2022, they currently share space at the Eastern Maine Development Corporation

This year, as more refugee and asylum seekers have come to Bangor, they have shifted and intensified their work, welcoming dozens of immigrant families to Maine They help connect them with education including language classes, find employment, access health care, complete forms and applications and find places to live Next year, they expect to help 100 more individuals

They've performed this vital function as volunteers, on a shoestring budget, and without funding from the state As we see more immigration in Maine, this work, especially outside the traditional service centers of Portland and Lewiston, is incredibly important

LD 320 proposes to fund one or more staff positions over the next two years to help MMCC take the next step – professionalize their work, seek new sources of ongoing funding, connect with other local organizations to amplify their programs and make sure that new families continue to be welcomed and integrated in the Bangor area

The text of the amendment and the amount of funding is modeled after an outlay provided by the state to create a welcome center in Portland, through the adult education program, in 2014 In speaking with the Department of Education, I've learned that this position became part of the New Mainer Resource Center and has been ongoing since 2014 I've also learned that they already plan to expand NMRC into Lewiston and Bangor and would be interested in coordinating with MMCC in the coming years

Whatever the source and the details of our support for the work of the Maine Multicultural Center, the need is clear and immediate If we want to continue to be a welcoming state with vibrant communities and a workforce that meets our needs, we should act to support programs to welcome and integrate immigrants in Eastern Maine, just as we already do in other parts of our state

I appreciate your consideration and I'm happy to answer any questions

**LD 320, An Act to Support the Maine Multicultural Center (Tipping)  
(CONCEPT DRAFT)**

**Senator Tipping Proposed Amendment for Public Hearing**

**New Title: “Resolve, to Establish the Maine Multicultural Center Welcome Center Initiative”**

**Amend the bill as follows:**

**Sec. 1. Maine Multicultural Center Welcome Center Initiative. Resolved:** That the Commissioner of Education, through the office within the Department of Education concerned with adult education and family literacy, shall establish a pilot project located within the Maine Multicultural Center in Bangor and modeled after the City of Portland’s Welcome Center Initiative. Initial funds provided to the pilot project must be used to employ one or more positions to develop a series of programs designed to serve the needs of foreign-trained workers. At a minimum, programs offered or coordinated by the pilot project must include education and career case management, English as a second language, referrals to legal assistance, employer networking and engagement and data collection and analysis about foreign-trained workers in this State. A primary responsibility of one or more of the positions is to secure ongoing funding to coordinate and sustain the project. The coordinator, with assistance from the department, may seek funding from private sources, including individuals, foundations and corporations, and from other public sources.

**Sec. 2. Appropriations and Allocations.** The following appropriations and allocations are made:

**EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF**  
Adult Education 0364

Initiative Provides funds towards one or more positions to establish a welcome center for foreign-trained workers within the Maine Multicultural Center in Bangor. The positions will develop and coordinate a comprehensive program designed to serve foreign-trained workers, with an emphasis on foreign-trained professionals, and seek private funds to support the center programs and operations.

<b>GENERAL FUND</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>
All Other	\$95,000	\$95,000
	_____	_____
<b>GENERAL FUND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$95,000</b>	<b>\$95,000</b>

## **SUMMARY**

This proposed amendment directs the Department of Education to establish a pilot project located within the Maine Multicultural Center in Bangor and modeled after the City of Portland's Welcome Center Initiative. Initial funds provided to the pilot project must be used towards one or more positions, who will develop and coordinate a comprehensive program designed to serve foreign-trained workers, with an emphasis on foreign-trained professionals, and seek private funds to support the center programs and operations.