



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Rep. Kristen Cloutier in support of*  
**LD 2167, An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by**  
**Establishing an Office of New Americans**  
*Before the Committee on State and Local Government*

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government, I am Kristen Cloutier, and I proudly represent House District 94, part of my hometown of Lewiston. I am here today in strong support of **LD 2167, An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans.**

Maine remains the oldest state in the country. More people are dying than are being born. As baby boomers exit the workforce, retiring in record numbers, there are fewer younger workers to fill the job openings available in all sectors of the economy. Employers can't find or retain reliable, skilled employees and the success of many Maine businesses depends upon the caliber and skills of our workforce.

As employers seek people to meet their job criteria and are increasingly considering New Mainers to fill vacancies, many immigrants and refugees come to the United States with high levels of education and are eager for employment. However, due to numerous barriers including English language abilities, cultural differences, and work visas, many immigrants and refugees have difficulty finding employment in their related fields. LD 2167 provides the coordinated response needed to reduce these barriers and to fill the gaps that exist in our workforce.

In addition, and of equal importance to the workforce solutions that this bill and an Office of New Americans presents, is the opportunity they provide to make Maine's state government and

its processes and policies more fair and just for all of her residents. Let us seize that opportunity, through LD 2167, to celebrate our diversity as our greatest strength and to build a Maine that is vibrant and rich in both history and heritage.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this timely and pressing legislation.