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Carl Sheline - Lewiston
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MAINE MAYORS COALITION
Strengthening Our Cities & Our State

Jodi MacPhail - Saco
Becky Brink - Sanford
Misha Pride - South Portland
Michael Morris - Waterville
Michael Foley - Westbrook

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**In Support of LD 2167, An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce
by Establishing an Office of New Americans**

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Michael Foley and I proudly serve as the Mayor of the City of Westbrook and Chair of the Maine Mayors Coalition.

The Maine Mayors Coalition is a nonpartisan group representing the mayors of ten Maine communities – Auburn, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland, Waterville and Westbrook – and more than 265,000 residents. The Coalition advocates on behalf of our citizens and municipalities for policies that recognize the vital services Maine cities provide and the positive impact Maine cities have on our state. The Coalition seeks to work in partnership with state and federal elected officials to meet the needs of Maine people.

We are testifying 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. We wish to thank Governor Mills for her work in creating this Office and Representative Dhalac for sponsoring this legislation.

Our cities have been welcoming new Americans for generations. Most recently, we've welcomed into our communities thousands of individuals and families who are seeking asylum. As mayors, our most immediate concerns are providing them with essential support and finding them housing, a task made all the more difficult given Maine's housing crisis.

We look forward to partnering with the Office to assist new Americans when they first arrive and as they become contributing members in our cities. We especially applaud the Office's duties and activities focused on addressing Maine's workforce shortage. As we're all aware, Maine businesses – and our municipalities – are in desperate need of workers. The Office will serve as a resource for both employers and new Americans to strengthen not only our workforce but also Maine's economy.

Many people seeking asylum turn to municipal General Assistance for support while they await their federal work permits. State law requires us to provide GA though the program was not designed for this purpose. We are seeing our GA budgets steadily increase, placing additional burdens on property owners, staffs and our ability to provide other critical services. We are hopeful the Office's activities will eventually include developing a state-administered program to assist new Americans with financial support as well as with transitional housing. Such a program would be an enormous help to municipalities across the state.

Until that time, our GA staffs would appreciate the Office's assistance guiding new Americans through the cumbersome process of filing the separate GA and housing applications and with verifying required information such as eligibility and income.

We urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 2167 and would be happy to provide you with additional information as you move forward with this important legislation. Thank you for your time.