



The Center for Financial Education

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Dear Legislature and committee residing this Bill,

ProsperityME welcomed the announcement by Governor Mills on the creation of the Office of New Americans back in 2023. I am pleased have been closely involved in the work that went into the report that was released two weeks ago and appreciate that my voice and the voices of so many other immigrants were heard as part of that process.

The purpose of this new office is to improve the economic and civic integration of immigrants in the state. The bill outlines the administration, duties, and activities of this new office. It also establishes an advisory council to provide guidance to the Office of New Americans on matters affecting immigrant integration.

The office would also collect data, liaise with local governments, help with resettlement services, accrediting foreign licensures, coordinate with local businesses to hire & retain immigrants, expand access to legal services for immigrants, and more.

As both the director of ProsperityME, an organization that provides a wide range of services including affordable housing, financial services, women economic empowerment, asset building, scholarship support for higher education and other services to immigrants in Maine, and as a city councilor in Westbrook who recognizes the important contributions that immigrants are making to the economic growth of our cities and the state of Maine, I know firsthand the important role that an Office of New Americans can play in supporting my community and other communities going forward.

As a New Mainer who struggled with my own integration, I am proud today to lead an agency with almost 20 employees including Immigrants and US citizens. I will personally be happy to work with the Office to help newly arrived people to avoid some of the difficulties I went through with no guidance to accelerate their integration.

I believe that this proposed Office of New Americans can have a very important role in better integrating immigrants into Maine's workforce and facilitating better coordination among the organizations, businesses, and municipalities across our state.

I also recognize that this office is already tasked to focus on many priorities, but the basic human needs including shelter are critical to the success of New Mainers and our State's economy.

I urge this body on both sides of the aisles to support this bill since they all support Maine's economy and growth. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Claude Rwaganje  
Executive Director  
ProsperityME