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**Testimony in Support of LD 2167, "An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and
Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans"
January 30, 2024**

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is George Hill and I stand before you as the President & CEO of Maine Family Planning to emphasize the crucial role that a State Office of New Americans plays in advancing sexual and reproductive healthcare for immigrants and refugees. As a healthcare advocate, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by these communities in accessing essential services, and the establishment of such an office is a significant step towards addressing these disparities.

Immigrants and refugees often arrive in a new country with diverse cultural backgrounds and varying levels of familiarity with the local healthcare system. Navigating the intricacies of sexual and reproductive health can be particularly daunting, given the cultural nuances and language barriers. A dedicated State Office of New Americans acts as a bridge, ensuring that information about health services is accessible and culturally competent.

This office can actively engage with immigrant and refugee communities, providing educational resources in multiple languages and fostering a welcoming environment. By tailoring outreach efforts to the unique needs of these populations, the office can help to dismantle stigmas surrounding sexual and reproductive health, encouraging individuals to seek the care they need without fear or hesitation.

Furthermore, the State Office of New Americans can collaborate with healthcare providers to develop training programs that sensitize professionals to the cultural diversity within their patient populations and create pathways to employment in health care professions for New Americans. Culturally competent and concordant care not only improves health outcomes but also enhances trust between healthcare providers and patients, leading to more open and effective communication.

In our diverse communities, inclusivity is paramount, and establishing a Maine Office of New Americans is an investment in the well-being of our entire state. In doing so, we contribute to the creation of a healthier, more resilient society that embraces the rich diversity of its members. On behalf of Maine Family Planning's patients, board, and staff, I urge you to vote ought to pass on this important piece of legislation.

Thank you.