



United Way
of Southern Maine

LIVE UNITED

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 honorable members of the Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Jared Gay, and I am the Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at United Way of Southern Maine (UWSM). I submit this testimony on behalf of United Ways of Maine in support of LD 2167, "An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans."

United Way is an organization committed to addressing both immediate and long-term challenges. I stand before you today to convey our wholehearted support for this bill, which seeks to establish the Office of New Americans (ONA).

This initiative aligns with our core belief that a thriving immigrant community can significantly boost our economy while enriching our society. We believe that LD 2167 and the ONA are vital for the future of Maine's economy and a beacon of progress.

First and foremost, our Immigrant Communities are valuable contributors to our economy. By facilitating their integration into our workforce, we can harness their skills and talents to drive economic growth and prosperity for all Mainers. The ONA will be a catalyst for economic advancement and financial stability within these communities, ultimately benefiting our entire state.

As Maine faces workforce shortages and demographic challenges, our Immigrant Communities offer a solution. The ONA's focus on creating workforce pathways, supporting entrepreneurship, and coordinating immigrant support organizations is of paramount importance. It will provide New Americans with access to employment opportunities, an essential component of achieving financial stability and self-sufficiency. By creating these pathways for our Immigrant Communities to actively participate in our economy, we not only address the workforce shortages but also extend a helping hand to a community in need, fostering a more inclusive and prosperous Maine for all.

Moreover, Maine's strength lies in its diversity. LD 2167 champions a welcoming and inclusive environment, enriching our culture and communities. By embracing and empowering immigrants, we can create a more vibrant and interconnected society that celebrates our differences and fosters community. This cultural enrichment is an invaluable asset that enhances the quality of life for all Mainers.

As part of the Office of New Americans State Network, Maine will benefit from shared expertise and best practices, further strengthening our ability to create inclusive and supportive environments. These collective efforts align with United Ways of Maine's dedication to fostering a community where everyone can thrive.

In conclusion, the establishment of the Office of New Americans is a pivotal step towards building a stronger, more inclusive Maine. It resonates deeply with United Ways of Maine's commitment to early learning, financial stability, and optimal health.

We urge you to support and pass this bill so that our Immigrant Communities can thrive, not just survive.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to the betterment of our beloved state.