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United Way
of Southern Maine



Hello Senator Nagle, Representative Stover, and Members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

My name is Taylor Cray, and I am the Advocacy Supervisor at Preble Street. I am here today to testify in support of LD 2167: An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans. Advocating for shelter, housing, food security, and recovery efforts statewide is a key part of Preble Street's mission. As the need for shelter and housing has increased across the State of Maine, it has become ever clearer that no aspect of Maine's communities and economies exists in a silo – we are all connected.

At Preble Street, we see firsthand the impacts of structural inequality and discriminatory policies. A 2020 calculation of people accessing services in ten Preble Street programs showed that 22% are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or People of Color) – more than three times the percentage of BIPOC individuals in Maine.

As the State of Maine moves toward a more diverse future, it is vital that we have adequate resources and supportive services for individuals and families who are transitioning into new communities. An Office of New Americans will do just this, while also ensuring that there is statewide coordination around these efforts. In a time when a lack of resources has caused friction and frustration between groups with differing needs, the representation of New Americans at a state level could not be more needed.

Preble Street believes in our approach of combining social work services with public policy advocacy and education, working relentlessly for social and economic justice. We are invested in the hard systemic work that it will take to ensure a more equitable and inclusive future, and in supporting organizations and structural changes that support this. By creating an Office of New Americans, the State of Maine is investing not only in those folks who may directly benefit from its services, but in the state as a whole.

As we seek to create and maintain an inclusive, safe, respectful, and welcoming environment for all people, we must continue to invest in the future of Maine by supporting those who create it. From shelters to offices, from the streets to healthcare clinics, everyone deserves dignity, equitable treatment, and respect for who they are.

The creation of an Office of New Americans will continue to help foster space for understanding, growth, and community-building. I ask that you please vote in favor of LD 2167.

Thank you for your consideration.

Meeting urgent needs • Empowering people • Advocating for change • Creating solutions to homelessness and hunger