

January 30, 2024

## **Testimony in Opposition to 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 members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government:

My name is Nathan Gould. I am from Winterport. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to LD 2167, "An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans."

Foremost among this bill's many issues is incentivizing illegal immigration. There is a lot that is said about equity these days. Equity is often defined as "fairness." How is it fair to those who have gone through the effort to legally become citizens when those who have broken the law and entered this country illegally are given advantages? Is it fair to the taxpayer to pay for those living off the government dole? Is it fair for workers if there is an infusion of cheap labor? There is nothing equitable about selectively enforcing our laws.

Attention should be paid to the observation that there are "refugees", "asylum - seekers," "undocumented immigrants"—however you decide to label these non-citizens—who have been here for years, yet we are still told our workforce needs strengthening. Where are they? And, in a state like Maine with a generous slew of welfare programs for citizens disinclined to seek gainful employment, why should we expect any different from another bureaucracy catering specifically to non-citizens? There are plenty of citizens well-versed in gaming the system. It is naive to assume individuals who have already broken the law by entering illegally won't continue to

abuse the generosity of those who decide where taxpayer's money is spent—that is, lawmakers.

Another important matter to observe is that this takes resources that could be used to tackle the homelessness that already exists in our State. With the rising cost of living, we cannot afford to add thousands of new wards of the state. We cannot afford to increase crime and drug use. We cannot afford to provide traffickers in drugs and human lives more places to hide.

The porous state of our open border and our lax immigration policy (at both State and Federal levels) is unsafe, putting not only current citizens at risk from criminals and potential acts of terrorism, but also importing those dangerous conditions that families genuinely seeking asylum here are trying to escape. Creating these incentives to illegally enter the country through policies this bill promotes only exasperates the problem. The goal of authentically helping those in need is noble, but it must be furthered without putting at risk the rights and safety of citizens and legal immigrants. How can government perform the primary function of protecting the equal rights of its citizens when some residing here haven't sworn allegiance to our nation and its laws? We must not devalue citizenship. Let our government perform its duty to enforce our laws and protect the rights of its citizens, and thereby better enable the People of Maine to bring aid to the needy.

Our open borders put our population at risk. The U.S. Border Patrol had over 2.4 million encounters on our southern border and 189,000 on our northern border in Fiscal Year 2023<sup>1</sup>. Regarding this massive immigration, New York City's Mayor Adams said at a town hall meeting last September that "the issue will destroy New York City." I would not call Mayor Adams a nativist. We should consider New York's struggle to handle the influx of illegal immigrants while keeping in mind our smaller population, GDP, and operating budget. We need only to look to the City of Portland's issues to see we are not better equipped, and should not be encouraging more illegal immigration. We can be better stewards of this State God has given us.

There was a point at which Democrats would decry any attempt at undercutting good-paying jobs, skeptical of big businesses' attempts to gain cheap labor. Republicans

---

1 <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters> Accessed 15 January 2024

were once known for standing for the rule of law and against the welfare state. Unfortunately, LD 2167 proves itself to be a bipartisan indiscretion.

What records I've seen indicate my family immigrated to New England nearly four centuries ago, and there was no "Office of New Americans" to facilitate our integration. Yet here we are. When we give those who did not follow the rules a free ride, it is insulting to those who have gone through the effort of immigrating legally, renouncing all allegiance to any foreign state, and gladly integrating into our culture and communities.

This bill serves as another cog in a machine made of incentives with harmful (hopefully unintended) consequences as a byproduct. We must not get generosity and permissiveness confused. Maine should do her part to protect her people and our Republic, to provide her citizens—whether their ancestors came here centuries ago or they took the Oath of Allegiance last week—with equal protection of the laws. We've a choice to be either a government of laws or of men. A government of men is as vicious and oppressive as the unconstrained vice and imperiousness of the men in the government. I would choose a government of men equal under the law.

I ask the members of this Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Nathan C Gould

Winterport