



124 Canal Street
Lewiston, Maine 04240
Phone: (207) 753-0061
Email: info@ircofmaine.org
www.ircofmaine.org

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Good afternoon, Representative Sachs, Senator Rotundo, and Members of the Maine Legislative Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

My name is Fatuma Hussein, and I'm the Executive Director of the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine. Since the organization's start, we've worked hard to improve the lives of refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers by providing system advocacy, post-resettlement, cross-cultural brokering, and referral services to meet their unique housing, language, childcare, and language access needs through various collaborative and systemic efforts. Our culturally and linguistically specific work significantly expanded as we took a more active role in meeting the unique needs and solving the unique issues of the New Mainer community during the pandemic, especially regarding rising homelessness. One of the most critical issues we have continued to tackle is housing insecurity and homelessness facing vulnerable New Mainer communities through implementing the Emergency Rental Assistance and other Housing Assistance programs.

Our Housing Assistance Programs have continued to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate housing relief applications, community outreach, and cultural services, including language assistance, to access housing stability support. Our Emergency Rental Assistance program has supported over 1,000 families, with over 200 families successfully placed into permanent housing, over 100 evictions prevented, and over 600 families successfully retained their housing stability. Our Housing Navigator Program further helped promote housing stability by successfully recruiting more than 30 landlords, including 5 significant landlords, who are pivotal in providing most rental units within the Lewiston and Auburn area. Our GAP Rental Assistance Program surpassed our goal of assisting 57 asylum-seeking families to over 200 families in receiving needed gap payments and housing stability support services to begin building a path towards self-sufficiency.

When we look at the work, we've done with many other organizations, our services, and resources fostered housing stability for diverse, vulnerable populations that continue to need support and resources to equip them with the tools and skills to empower and maintain stable housing and quality of life successfully.



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I strongly urge you to support this supplementary appropriations and allocations in L.D. 2214 (pt. HH). This bill is critical to continuing our work to ensure all New Mainers receive the needed housing stability services and support to build and maintain better lives in this state.

Fatuma Hussein,

Executive Director,
Immigrant Resource Center of Maine
fhussain@uswofmaine.org