



Susan Bernard
Senator, District 1

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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Augusta, Maine 04333

***LD 1318, An Act to Enhance Data Collection Requirements Related to Immigration Status
and Asylum Seekers to Safeguard Services for Legal Residents.***

Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary

Public Hearing

April 7, 2025

1:00pm

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary. My name is Senator Sue Bernard, and I am the sponsor of LD 1318, *An Act to Enhance Data Collection Requirements Related to Immigration Status and Asylum Seekers to Safeguard Services for Legal Residents*.

The Office of New Americans was established in the 2024 Supplemental Budget, LD 2214. It has a statutory purpose of, "...improving the economic and civic integration of immigrants into the State's workforce and communities to strengthen the economy over the long term."

This bill is very straightforward and consistent with the statutory purpose and activities of the office. It requires the Office of New Americans to systematically collect and maintain data on the immigration status of individuals it serves and to analyze data on the outcomes for individuals seeking asylum – including the status and resolution of asylum claims – in order to understand immigration trends and support service delivery.

Collecting and analyzing relevant data is the first listed duty of the Office of New Americans. However, there is no detail on what that data should entail. Without having metrics for success, it is impossible for policy makers – and the office itself – to understand how effective their programs are. Basic data on immigration status would allow the state to allocate funding more efficiently, design program and services that overcome barriers to integration, and monitor the effectiveness of policies over time. This would help ensure that the support offered is both equitable and responsive to changing immigration policies and patterns.

Put more simply, evidence and data-driven decisions cannot be made if we don't have the data to begin with. Right now, the State of Maine does not have any idea how many individuals are seeking asylum here, nor do we have any idea how many have been able to successfully navigate this long and difficult process.

Without more information, we are flying blind. I ask that you vote in support of LD 1318.