

Elmuatz Abdelrahim
Auburn - New Mainers Alliance

Senator Deschambeault, Representative Warren, Representative Brooks, and honorable members of the committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. I am here to speak in favor of LD 963, "An Act To Create Culturally Sensitive Treatment and Recovery Halfway Houses for Immigrants Transitioning out of the Juvenile Justice System." My name is _____ Mutaz _____ and I am a resident of _____ Auburn _____.

I am sharing my testimony as the Co- Executive director of New Mainers Alliance and a community organizer helping the community since 2007 when I moved to Maine from NY State.

During the years Im involved with different new mainers immigrant communities Ibsaw that young people in my community have had negative experiences in the juvenile justice system. Most of them go to jail for potty crimes, but loose their way completely and never return back to become good American citizens again because for such devastating experience with the justice system.

I strongly support this bill because the lack of culturally competent facilities has dire consequences: breaking of families. homelessness, drug dealing, trafficking, and ultimately prostitution for our minor kids.

One of the stories I will share with you today is an story of a beautiful young girl 24 years of age loves dancing and verykond and her helping to her siblings and neighbors.... She was an honor roll student and always at the top of her class u. Til she finished middle school. When she is 15 years old and because of wrong high school friends they pushed her to try drugs. Then all her life changed.... She was hooked to the drug and to afford its price she was told to go and spent few hours in sex house to sell her young beautiful body to afford the daily does. Her excuse was home work with her friends... Her grade dropped and her needs to drugs was rising.... Couple of hours were not enough and she had to sell drug and ended up in jail. The family could not believe it, she couldn't believe.... She lived the withdrawal and shame alone inside the jail. When she came our her family disowned her, no relative to take her back, no money no school no work no door that is open to guide her.... She moved to Minneapolis through contacts from the criminal organization in Maine.... And we can imagined the end of the story.... If she has the support we are skiing for today we would have saved her and told her everyone make mistakes, gave her a safe home, provide her with counseling and work to get her back to finish her high school, become a doctor or a scientist and help her family. Community and country.

Do you know how many others we lost?????
I don't.

Passing this bill will ensure that you me and the rest of the community are doing the right thing to save those bright, smart, wonderful young kids when they need help the most.

Mutaz Abdelrahim
Co-Executive Director
New Mainers Alliance