

MIRC TESTIMONY SUPPORTING LD 1239

“An Act To Establish the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative in the Department of Education To Lower Barriers to Career Advancement”

Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

Thursday, April 22nd at 10 am

Sponsor: Representative Rachel Talbot Ross

Good Morning Sen. Daughtry, Rep. Brennan and Members of the Committee

“Turning the Tide for the Multicultural Population In Maine” by Passing LD1239

My name is Mufalo Chitam. I am here to testify in **SUPPORT of LD 1239** on behalf of the board and 77 members of [Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition](#) (MIRC) with a commitment to advancing and defending the rights of immigrants.

Our mission is to improve the legal, social and economic conditions experienced by Maine’s immigrants – enhancing their lives while strengthening Maine – through advocacy, information sharing and collaboration both through and among our member organizations.

Maine has seen a growth of immigrants in the last 10 years but needs to grow infrastructure at the same rate in order to support their economic and social integration. Maine has almost 10,000 multicultural college and university students, many from out of state, and it has over 600 high skilled H1B visa workers, many are in our IT and medical sectors.

MIRC strongly believes that immigrants need to be developed intentionally and systematically. Prior to the pandemic Maine had been experiencing historic low unemployment rates of under 4% but had a problem of underemployment.

LD 1239 aligns with the MIRC vision of building the capacity of immigrants and passing this bill will address the underemployment problems in our new Mainer population and will encourage our multicultural students to remain in Maine after graduating.

This bill is important now, especially at this monumental time. If Maine is to thrive, immigrants must be able to get support services like **“Career Advancement and Navigation Specialist”** that help to speed their integration in the community and improve their work/school readiness.

Passing LD 1239 will help to open up more employment opportunities across many other untapped sectors for multicultural populations thereby advancing opportunity and economic equity for Maine’s Black, Indigenous, and communities of color, as well as for recent immigrants to Maine.

In the last 12 months due to COVID19, MIRC has taken a lead role in advocating for benefits that will help address disparities in the system. WE are leading the way toward a future Maine that is built on principles of racial and social justice, economic security, and inclusion.

Today we ask this committee to work with us by passing this bill to ensure that Maine can compete in a growing multicultural workforce and economy.

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Enhancing Immigrant Lives for a Stronger Maine!

MIRC MEMBERS

ACLU of Maine
 African Women and Development
 Angolan Community Association of Maine
 Aspire For Humanity Initiatives
 Baha'i Community and Organic Change
 Black Owned Maine
 Boundless MEDIA
 Burundi Community Association of Maine
 Cambodian Community Association of Maine
 Capital Area New Mainers Project
 CCM - Refugee and Immigration Services
 Coastal Enterprises, Inc (CEI)
 Choose Yourself
 City of Portland - Minority Health Program
 Congolese Brazzaville Community of Maine
 Congolese Community of Maine
 Congregation Bet Ha'am - Tikkun Olam Council
 Cross Cultural Consulting Group
 Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, Refugee and Human Rights
 Djibouti Community and Volunteer Services
 Empower Immigrant Women(EIW)
 First Parish UU Church
 Frannie Peabody Center
 Furniture Friends
 Gateway Community Services Maine
 Greater Portland Family Promise
 Hispanic Ministry - Portland Diocese
 Hope Acts
 Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
 Immigrant Resource Center Of Maine
 IN HER PRESENCE
 Iraqi Community Association of Maine
 Jewish Action Maine
 Ladder to the Moon Network
 Latinx Family Wellness & Recreation
 Light Mission Church
 Mahoro Maine Association
 Maine Access Immigrant Network (MAIN)
 Maine Business Immigration Coalition
 Maine Citizens for Clean Elections - LWV
 Maine Community Integration
 Maine Council of Churches
 Maine Equal Justice Partners
 Maine Immigrant & Refugee Services
 Maine Mobile Health Program
 Maine Multicultural Center
 Maine People's Alliance
 Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy
 Maine Women's Lobby
 Mano en Mano / Hand in Hand
 NAACP
 Network & Scholarships for Maine Immigrants Org
 New England Djibouti Community
 New Mainer Tenants Association
 New Mainers PAC
 New Mainers Resource Center-Portland Adult Ed.
 Office of Maine Refugee Services-CCM
 Portland Empowered
 Portland Friends Meeting
 Preble Street
 Presente!ME
 Prosperity Maine
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland
 Rwandese Community Association of Maine
 Somali Bantu Community Association
 Somali Community Center of Maine
 South Sudanese Community Association of Maine
 Southern Maine Community College
 Southern Maine Workers Center
 Sudanese Roots
 Unified Asian Communities
 Welcoming Immigrants Network (WIN) of Greater Portland
 Welcoming Immigrants, Our New Neighbors