

Tobin Williamson  
Lewiston  
LD 1702

Chair Rafferty, Chair Brennan, Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Tobin Williamson and I am the Advocacy Manager for the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition. I regret that my travels for a work conference prohibit me from joining you in the Public Hearing today.

I am writing in strong support of LD 1702 - Resolve, to Establish the Commission to Improve the Educational Experience of People Who Are Resettling in Maine.

Whenever significant communities of new arrivals settle in a town, one of the first things we hear about is the impact it has / will have on the local schools. Our educators are heroic, but many Maine schools are understaffed, underpaid, and overworked. Additionally, many are not trained or equipped with the types of additional services needed by these students; language access, transportation, trauma-informed care, cultural competency, and so forth.

In conversations with the Maine Education Association last year, we realized it might be a good idea for there to be a commission established in order to improve the educational experiences of people who are resettling in Maine. LD 1702 is the result of these and additional discussions, and I am proud to see it under consideration. By gathering a group of stakeholders who know the needs of this population, we are hopeful there will be improvements in the educational experience for all.

Additionally, my mother was an ESL teacher at the public school I attended from K-12, so this issue is a personal one for me. Through her work and her students, I saw first-hand the successes and the challenges of immigrant communities in our small town as I grew up. That left an impression on me, and today I now work for an immigrants' rights organization.

Thank you again for your consideration of LD 1702. I encourage you to pass it with strong support.