



March 22, 2021

Sen. Chip Curry
Rep. Tiffany Roberts
Committee Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement
Cross Building, Room 202
Augusta, ME 04333

Submitted via Legislature's Testimony Submissions portal

Re: **LD 149, An Act To Facilitate Licensure for Credentialed Individuals from Other Jurisdictions**

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I direct the Maine Business Immigration Coalition (MeBIC). MeBIC is Maine's only resource dedicated to providing information, education and advocacy on immigration and related issues from and for the business and economic perspective.

MeBIC enthusiastically supports LD 149.

As you are well aware, Maine's labor supply is shrinking as baby boomers retire and as Maine's birthrates have fallen. The pandemic has not changed the fact that Maine's employers say that finding workers is still one of their greatest challenges. Maine needs a vibrant workforce if the state is to be competitive and have a strong economic future. Immigrants to Maine are key to our state's population growth and our ability to stem the state's workforce shrinkage. This has been recognized in the [Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029](#) and by the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee.

More recently, recognizing immigrants' importance to Maine's economy, over 90 Maine businesses, chambers of commerce, trade associations, and higher education institutions have signed the [Maine Compact on Immigration](#) (attached) urging state leaders to "adopt policies and practices to help Maine become a destination of choice for immigrants to the U.S. and that provide an environment where immigrants can reach their full potential in our state."

LD 149 is exactly the type of policy change that the signers of the Compact envision. Many of Maine's first generation immigrants are highly educated, with education, credentials, and experience acquired abroad before immigrating. But so-called "brain waste," is rampant, sidelining foreign educated/trained/experienced immigrants from working in their chosen professions because of barriers to having their credentials recognized and getting state licensure. This waste of human potential extends beyond those in professional careers to those

who may have been cosmetologists, plumbers, and working in a wide range of other trades or careers requiring a license in Maine.

Various reports, including the “[Supporting Maine’s Foreign Trained Professionals](#)” April 2020 report, and the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation’s report from March 3, 2020, have outlined the loss to immigrants and to the State when they face barriers to credentials recognition and licensure.

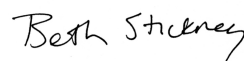
LD 149 would give Office of Professional and Occupational Regulation (OPOR) sorely needed flexibility, on a case by case basis, to grant licensure to those who have moved to Maine from other states or other countries, without any kind of blanket lowering of standards, which could happen under two other licensure bills that this Committee will be considering, LD 612 and LD 1131 (which are word-for-word identical to each other, indicating they were likely crafted by a national organization, and not drafted with any consideration of Maine’s specific needs). Moreover, those latter two bills largely focus on individuals moving to Maine from other states, giving those moving from abroad short shrift. Yet, since 2010, to the extent that Maine’s population has grown at all, data shows that it has grown due to international immigrants moving to Maine, not due to in-migration of people from other states. LD 149’s much more thorough consideration of Maine residents from abroad would meet Maine’s needs far better than LDs 612 and 1131.

LD 149 implements thoughtful recommendations produced by a working group created by the Legislature that involved relevant stakeholders, and will help individuals from other countries, as well as from other states, be able to more quickly reach their full potential here in Maine, without sacrificing standards of competence. The bill will benefit both those who move to Maine from elsewhere, and Maine’s employers, economy, and tax base.

It’s time for Maine to take intentional, affirmative steps to make sure that all people, regardless of where they acquired their expertise and their licensure or credentials, can succeed in Maine. LD 149 makes great strides in that direction.

I urge the Committee to vote “ought to pass” on LD 149.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Stickney".

Beth Stickney, Esq.
Executive Director



MAINE COMPACT *on* IMMIGRATION

The **Maine Compact on Immigration** is a bipartisan initiative by members of Maine's business community and higher education institutions to promote immigration policies that will strengthen our economy and communities, attract and retain global talent, and bring new entrepreneurs, businesses and workers to our nation and state. The Compact's principles reflect the signatories' vision of commonsense and future-focused federal immigration reforms that reaffirm the country's commitment to remaining a nation that welcomes immigrants, and that address the realities of our state's and nation's workforce needs and demographic challenges. These principles also affirm the signatories' support for state and local policies and practices that recognize the myriad economic contributions immigrants make as volunteers, consumers, students, workers, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, and civically engaged citizens, strengthening Maine's communities and economy.

We urge Maine's congressional delegation and state leaders to adopt the principles of the Maine Compact on Immigration to guide the immigration discussion in our state. Furthermore, we encourage state and local leaders to follow suit with policies, practices and programs that create welcoming communities in Maine.

Maine Compact on Immigration Principles:

- 1. FEDERAL SOLUTIONS:** Immigration policy is a federal issue with profound impact on states and the economy. We urge Maine's congressional delegation to lead aggressive efforts to enact immigration reforms that update and vastly improve our nation's outdated immigration system, protect our borders while preserving due process and human rights, and facilitate trade. Maine will thrive with a federal immigration system that is flexible enough to address the needs of businesses, while protecting the interests of both foreign-born and native-born workers.
- 2. STRENGTHENING OUR ECONOMY & WORKFORCE:** For our state economy to grow and compete, Maine needs a robust workforce and policies that prioritize attracting and retaining global talent. This necessitates a federal immigration system that is both responsive to, and effective at, meeting the demands of Maine's economy and the sectors that drive growth in our state. We also call on state leaders to adopt policies and practices to help Maine become a destination of choice for immigrants to the U.S. and that provide an environment where immigrants can reach their full potential in our state.
- 3. FAMILY:** Strong families are critical to developing successful individuals and cohesive communities. Federal immigration policies should prioritize keeping families together in order to ensure the most supportive home environments for all children in our country and across our state.
- 4. A COMMONSENSE APPROACH:** Immigrants have always been, and remain, an important part of our communities. We must adopt a commonsense approach to immigration that reflects our long-established values and recognizes the critical role that immigration has played in the history, culture, and economy of both our state and the nation. Federal immigration policies must provide

sensible and fair paths forward for immigrants wishing to come to the U.S. to find opportunity and to work, to join their immediate families, and to seek refuge from persecution. Our immigration laws must also include a path towards citizenship for those already here who lack legal status and who are of good character, pay taxes, and are committed to becoming fully participating members of our society and culture.

- 5. EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT:** We support a federal immigration enforcement strategy that emphasizes public safety, targets serious crime, safeguards witnesses and victims, keeps families together whenever possible, and considers the interests of and unintended consequences to businesses, the workforce, and communities. Local law enforcement resources should focus on criminal activities, not on civil violations of federal code.
- 6. STRONG COMMUNITIES:** Communities that grow and attract talent are the ones that are welcoming to all. We support state and local policies, practices and programs that provide a welcoming environment for immigrants and offer all residents the tools and opportunities they need to succeed.

Signatories

Adele Masengo Designs	Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences	Eastern Maine Development Corporation
American Roots	Bowdoin College	Educate Maine
Androscoggin Bank	C. Love Cookie Project/ C. Love Baking School	Fisherman's Net
Associated General Contractors of Maine	Cabot7	Focus Maine
Austin Street Brewery	Cambium	Fogtown Brewing Co.
Axiom	Catama Productions	Geiger
Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce	Central Maine Power	Goodwill Industries of Northern New England
Bangor Savings Bank	Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI)	Gorham Savings Bank
Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce	Coffee by Design	Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center
Bates College	Colby College	GWI (Great Works Internet)
Bernstein Shur	Common Census	Hancock Lumber
BerryDunn	Community Concepts Finance Corporation	Hospitality Maine
Biddeford-Saco Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Dead River	Hussey Seating

IntWork, LLC	Maine Tourism Association	Rosemont Market & Bakery
Jasper Wyman & Sons	MaineHealth	RSC Consulting
Lee Auto Malls	Mandy Levine Consulting, LLC	Sappi North America
Lee International	Manufacturers Association of Maine	Sebasco Harbor Resort
Lewiston-Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce	MEMIC	Southern Midcoast Chamber of Commerce
Live and Work in Maine	Northern Light Health	Spurwink
Lucro Management	ON Semiconductor	St. Joseph's College
Luke's Lobster	Orono Brewing	St.Germain
Maine Beer Company	Pan Tim Wood Products	The Jackson Laboratory
Maine Business Immigration Coalition (MeBIC)	Penobscot Community Health Care	Thomas College
Maine Center for Entrepreneurs	Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce	Tilson
Maine College of Art	Portland Yacht Services	TRSS Wealth Management
Maine Community Action Partnership	Preti Flaherty	Tyson / Barber Foods
Maine Dairy Farmers Association	ProSearch	Union River Lobster Pot
Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association	Rainbow Construction, Inc.	University of New England
Maine Health Care Association	Ready Seafood	Unum Group
Maine State Chamber of Commerce	Retail Association of Maine	VETRO FiberMap
Maine Stream Finance	Revision Energy	WEX
	Rising Tide Brewing Co.	Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

Beth Stickney
Maine Business Immigration Coalition

Note: I would like to testify on LD 149 orally, but have a conflicting meeting from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. on 3/23, so depending on how quickly (or not) oral testimony in support of LD 149 goes, I may not actually be able to join the public hearing Zoom in time to testify. If I'm not present on the Zoom in time to testify, please just accept my attached written testimony in support of LD 149. Thank you.