

Ann Dodd-Collins
Portland
LD 1050

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing on LD 1050, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Labor to Request a Federal Waiver to Allow Presumptive Work Eligibility for Asylum Seekers”, public hearing to be held on March 21, 2023.

Senator Mike Tipping, Representative Amy Roeder, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ann Dodd-Collins and I am a resident of Portland. I volunteer with Greater Portland Family Promise and Preble Street and I am testifying in support of LD 1050, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Labor to Request a Federal Waiver to Allow Presumptive Work Eligibility for Asylum Seekers”.

As a volunteer who works with asylum seekers, I am well aware of the length of time it takes for those who are seeking asylum in Maine to get work permits. These are people who came to Maine seeking a better, safer place in which to raise their families. They want to work. Many of them have skills Maine desperately needs. Everywhere I turn I see “Help Wanted” signs. I read stories and hear news accounts about businesses that cannot find the workers they need. Yet the length of time it currently takes to get a work permit forces families to rely on General Assistance vouchers, takes a toll on their dignity and self worth, and leaves important jobs unfilled. This is wrong.

I encourage you to direct the Department of Labor to request a waiver and allow asylum seekers who want to make Maine their home an opportunity to get to work. It’s a win-win.
Sincerely, Ann Dodd-Collins