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To the Committee on State and Local Government --

My name is Charlie Gauvin, I grew up in New Gloucester and Portland, completed my undergraduate studies in Waterville, and have been working to facilitate the resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers in Portland for the last five years. During that time, it has been my privilege to bear witness to the numerous and diverse ways in which these newer residents strengthen the social and cultural fabric, communities, and workforce in Maine. I have too many examples of this and anecdotes to share here, but the achievements and contributions of Maine's newer residents have not taken place without having to overcome significant social, economic, and structural barriers. The establishment of the Office of New Americans represents a much needed collaborative step to engage with Maine's immigrant communities and work together with key stakeholders to identify address the challenges facing immigrants in Maine of all statuses. I am currently living abroad studying for a masters degree in Migration, Mobility, and Development, but my roots remain firmly planted in Maine and I hope to use the knowledge and experience I am building on with my studies to continue the work of helping immigrants in Maine develop their own roots there, which I sincerely believe occurs to the benefit of all who call Maine home. I hope that, when I do return to Maine, the work of the Office of New Americans to engage with and empower immigrants in Maine is already well underway and that I can find my own way to continue in contributing to that work. I am proud to live in a state that represents opportunity, peace, and prosperity for all who live there, and I look forward to seeing how the Office of New Americans ensures that such prospects are protected and developed in years to come. Thank you in advance for your support of the establishment of this office.