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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 2167 An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans

January 30, 2024

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of the Maine Community Action Partnership, the association of the ten Community Action Agencies in Maine, and we support LD 2167 An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans.

Our state's greatest resource is our people, and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. In Community Action, we create conditions that invite children to learn and adults to apply their skills, tapping into the deep-rooted potential in our communities. Through our community-led approach, we build a family's capacity for sustained stability and economic growth. We invest in the family's well-being, we let them drive their own story, and we have tangible success.

That is true regardless of where the family came from – another area of Maine, another state, or another county. We know that community diversity is essential for community health, wellness, and growth. The economic well-being of any community is dependent on the individuals and families that live, work, play and pray within and around it. When new families arrive in a community, it invites new experiences and opportunities, and New Americans offer these and more benefits particularly well.

When over 100 asylum seekers were bussed from Portland to Sanford in May of last year, York County Community Action Corporation was there to assist individuals and families to find housing – at first in hotels and then more permanent; they ensured everyone was fed, appropriately clothed and children were enrolled in school, adults in English Language Learner classes, etc. Of course, we did not do it alone, in Sanford or in Portland or in Waterville – we work with our partners, local and state government, and volunteers.

With the new Office of New Americans, we can better align our assets, be they human, monetary, or place-based, and we can work together to ensure the best outcomes for all who wish to call Maine home, just as all of us have done. We look forward to working with the ONA in the future, as we have worked with the Governor's Office of Policy, Innovation and the Future since its inception.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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