



# Permanent Commission RACIAL, INDIGENOUS & TRIBAL POPULATIONS

## **LD2167 “An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans ”**

**January 30, 2024**

Senator Nangel, Representative Stover, and Honorable Members of the State and Local Government Committee.

My name is Rae Sage, and I am the Policy Coordinator for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. The Permanent Commission’s role is to examine racial disparities across all systems and advise Maine State Government on ways to improve the status and outcomes of historically disadvantaged racial, Indigenous, and tribal populations.

The Permanent Commission supports LD 2167 in its efforts to provide more resources to the diverse communities starting their stories here. The establishment of an Office of New Americans will provide more accurate data about these populations, create a centralized hub to vector assistance, and help New Mainers integrate into Maine communities while preserving the uniqueness of their cultural identity. The ONA’s policy goals will address many issues faced by foreign-born Mainers including housing, economic, food, and work related disparities. The more Mainers with access to the resources that create a better quality of life for themselves, the better Maine is for all residents regardless of race, gender, nationality, or zip code.

Immigration has been an integral part of America’s story since its inception. The establishment of the ONA is both a continuation of that story and an effort to support those who make America what it is. Though cultural differences, language barriers, and general fears of change can

fuel communal tensions, it is important to remember that our state's growth is contingent on our cooperation.

LD 2167 will strengthen communities by:

- Expanding language access
- Increasing access to legal representation
- Convening government agencies and community stakeholders
- Expanding pathways to licensure and economic participation
- Coordinating naturalization ceremonies, and
- Supporting immigrant entrepreneurs.

It will also strengthen Maine's economy by:

- Attracting more working-age populations to Maine's labor force
- Helping New Mainers access more economic power and self determination
- Reducing the need of certain social safety nets, and
- Attracting new enterprises as Maine's communities diversify.<sup>1</sup>

By creating the ONA, Maine joins 18 other states already creating better pathways for their Immigrant communities. At large, LD 2167 represents a coordinated effort to better the lives of all who call Maine home. Thank You.

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<sup>1</sup> [ONA Report V.FinalLayout.pdf \(maine.gov\)](#)