

MIRC POLICY PRIORITIES 2024 -2026 Legislative Session Framework

Economic Opportunity and Workforce Development

Background:

The creation of the Office of New Americans in Maine will assist many get connected to resources and employment opportunities around the state. Immigrants contributed **\$625 million to the Maine economy in 2022** and account for 4.5% of Maine's labor force, playing a vital role in supporting the state's economy. Over half of Maine's immigrant population has become naturalized citizens. Work permit and Asylum backlogs have posed challenges in people being able to settle into communities but have been seeing many success stories. Maines immigrant population works in various sectors across the state throughout the states history.

Goal: Promote policies that enable immigrants to contribute fully to Maine's economy and workforce.

- **Talking Point:** As community members, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are essential to Maine's diverse and vibrant communities, contributing significantly to the well-being and prosperity of the state.

Policy Objectives:

- **Credential Recognition:** Establish pathways for recognizing foreign professional certifications and skills to integrate immigrant talent into the workforce.
- **Job Training and Placement:** Expand workforce development programs, including ESL training, vocational skills, and apprenticeships.
- **Fair Labor Protections:** Strengthen enforcement of labor laws, ensuring immigrant workers receive fair wages and protections from exploitation.
- **Work Permit Advocacy:** Reduce the period which people have to wait in order to obtain a work permit and make work permits continuously valid through the entire asylum adjudication process

Importance:

Without access to Economic Opportunity and Workforce Development people in Maine can face difficulties in:

- Living healthy lives
- Contributing to their communities
- Providing for their families

MISSION STATEMENT

To improve the legal, social, and economic conditions experienced by Maine's immigrants – enhancing their lives while strengthening Maine – through advocacy, information sharing, and collaboration both through and among our member organizations