

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2024

Legislative Document

No. 2167

H.P. 1387

House of Representatives, January 16, 2024

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

Reference to the Committee on State and Local Government suggested and ordered printed.


ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative DHALAC of South Portland. (GOVERNOR'S BILL)
Cosponsored by Senator BENNETT of Oxford and
Representatives: ABDI of Lewiston, COLLAMORE of Pittsfield, STOVER of Boothbay,
Speaker TALBOT ROSS of Portland, Senator: ROTUNDO of Androscoggin.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §3110** is enacted to read:

3 **§3110. Office of New Americans**

4 **1. Establishment; purpose; administration.** The Office of New Americans is
5 established within the Office of Policy Innovation and the Future for the purpose of
6 improving the economic and civic integration of immigrants into the State's workforce and
7 communities to strengthen the economy over the long term. The Office of Policy
8 Innovation and the Future shall administer the Office of New Americans.

9 **2. Director; duties.** The director of the Office of New Americans shall serve at the
10 pleasure of the director of the Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. The director of
11 the Office of New Americans shall assist the director of the Office of Policy Innovation
12 and the Future in performing the following duties within the Office of New Americans:

13 A. Hiring professional personnel competent by education, training and experience to
14 carry out the work of the Office of New Americans;

15 B. Supervising and administering the affairs of the Office of New Americans;

16 C. Determining the necessary budget for the Office of New Americans; and

17 D. Reporting on the activities of the Office of New Americans.

18 **3. Duties of the Office of New Americans.** Under the supervision of the director of
19 the Office of Policy Innovation and the Future and the director of the Office of New
20 Americans, and with guidance from the Office of New Americans Advisory Council
21 established in section 3111, the Office of New Americans shall identify and address needs,
22 barriers and opportunities in order to support the long-term economic and civic integration
23 of immigrants in the State by:

24 A. Collecting and analyzing relevant data;

25 B. Coordinating with all relevant local, state and federal government agencies;

26 C. Serving as the State's primary liaison with all relevant external stakeholders; and

27 D. Undertaking and promoting activities that improve the economic and civic
28 integration of immigrants into the State's workforce and communities.

29 **4. Activities.** The Office of New Americans shall undertake and promote activities that
30 improve the economic and civic integration of immigrants into the State's workforce and
31 communities. Activities may include, but are not limited to:

32 A. Strengthening workforce opportunities by providing guidance and promoting
33 improved pathways for professional accreditation and licensure, supporting enhanced
34 career pathways and engaging with businesses to increase employment, retention and
35 advancement of immigrant employees;

36 B. Expanding, improving and increasing access to English language learning programs;

37 C. Supporting the expansion of access to legal services and protections;

38 D. Partnering with and supporting municipalities, school administrative units,
39 educational institutions, community-based organizations and businesses providing
40 assistance or opportunities to immigrants;

1 E. Participating in the nationwide Office of New Americans State Network, or its
2 successor network, to access information and best practices from other states;

3 F. Collaborating with and providing guidance to agencies of State Government and the
4 entity designated by the Federal Government to administer the State's refugee
5 resettlement services in developing and executing policies that support the purpose of
6 the Office of New Americans;

7 G. Coordinating with and advising federal agencies and the State's congressional
8 delegation on federal policies that support the purpose of the Office of New Americans;

9 H. Advising the Governor and Legislature regarding any statutory, regulatory or other
10 policies or practices that may be addressed to better support the purpose of the Office
11 of New Americans; and

12 I. Promoting greater understanding of the history of immigration in the State, the
13 contributions and influence of immigrants in the State and how communities may
14 support immigrants' integration into local civic and economic life.

15 **5. Rulemaking.** The Office of New Americans may adopt rules as necessary for the
16 proper administration of this section and section 3111 pursuant to the Maine Administrative
17 Procedure Act. Unless otherwise specified, rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are
18 routine technical rules as defined in chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

19 **6. Report.** Beginning February 1, 2026, the Office of New Americans shall report
20 biennially to the Governor and to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having
21 jurisdiction over relevant matters with information and recommendations relating to the
22 work and needs of the Office of New Americans.

23 **Sec. 2. 5 MRSA §3111** is enacted to read:

24 **§3111. Office of New Americans Advisory Council**

25 The Office of New Americans Advisory Council, as established in section 12004-I,
26 subsection 6-K, is created as an advisory council to the Office of New Americans
27 established in section 3110 on matters affecting the long-term economic and civic
28 integration of immigrants in the State.

29 **1. Duties of advisory council.** The advisory council shall advise the Office of New
30 Americans on matters affecting the long-term economic and civic integration of immigrants
31 in the State.

32 **2. Membership.** The advisory council consists of 19 members as follows:

33 A. At least 10 members who are immigrants, 8 appointed by the Governor, one
34 appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the
35 House;

36 B. Three members appointed by the President of the Senate representing the following:

37 (1) A school administrative unit;

38 (2) An adult education program; and

39 (3) A small business;

40 C. Three members appointed by the Speaker of the House representing the following:

- (1) An organization providing refugee resettlement services;
- (2) A provider of legal assistance to immigrants; and
- (3) A municipality; and

D. Three members appointed by the Governor representing the following:

- (1) A large business;
- (2) A provider of housing assistance; and
- (3) An organization with demonstrated expertise in workforce development.

In making appointments of members to the advisory council, the appointing authorities shall make a good faith effort to ensure that the members of the advisory council reflect geographic, gender, ethnic and racial diversity.

3. Terms of office; removal. Members of the advisory council serve 3-year terms and may be reappointed. A vacancy for an unexpired term must be filled in accordance with subsection 2. A member may serve until a replacement is appointed. The Governor may terminate the membership of any appointee for good cause. The reason for the termination must be communicated in writing to a member whose membership is terminated. The membership of any member of the advisory council must be terminated if the member is absent from 3 consecutive meetings without communicating good cause to a chair of the advisory council.

4. Cochairs. The Governor shall appoint 2 cochairs from among the members appointed and serving pursuant to subsection 2.

5. Meetings; staffing. The advisory council shall meet at the discretion of the cochairs. Meetings may be cancelled or postponed at the discretion of the cochairs. All meetings of the advisory council are public proceedings within the meaning of Title 1, chapter 13, subchapter 1. The Office of New Americans shall provide staffing services as necessary to the advisory council.

Sec. 3. 5 MRSA §12004-I, sub-§6-K is enacted to read:

6-K.

<u>Economic</u>	<u>Office of New Americans Advisory</u>	<u>Not Authorized</u>	<u>5 MRSA</u>
<u>Development</u>	<u>Council</u>		<u>§3111</u>

SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Office of New Americans within the Office of Policy Innovation and the Future and also establishes an advisory council to the Office of New Americans.