



**LD 2167 - An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by
Establishing an Office of New Americans**

**Public Hearing: Tuesday, January 30th, 1pm | Committee: State and Local Government
|Cross Building, Room 214**

Background

As a coalition of over 100 organizations representing diverse ethnic communities, our vision is rooted in a commitment to fight inequities and empower BIPOC and immigrant groups. MIRC envisions a future that is inclusive and equitable for all Mainers. Maine's diverse immigrant communities contribute significantly to our state's cultural and economic vitality. Recognizing the importance of growing the state's economy and workforce, the Governor's Office has proposed the creation of an Office of New Americans with a focus on workforce development.

Purpose

To contribute to the successful integration of immigrants, enhancing their contributions to Maine's workforce and communities.

Getting to the State House:

The State House is on the corner of State Street and Capitol Street, at **7 State House Drive in Augusta**. The public door is in the back, so you will park and enter from behind the State House. You can enter the Cross Office Building, walk straight through, and go outside to see the back of the State House. Walk through the courtyard to the State House doors and through security.

The Legislature offers these directions:

<https://legislature.maine.gov/lis/directions-to-the-state-house/9081>

You can get directions directly from your house at Waze:

<https://www.waze.com/live-map/directions/maine-state-capitol-building-state-house-dr-7-augusta?to=place.w.190185915.1901990223.265783>

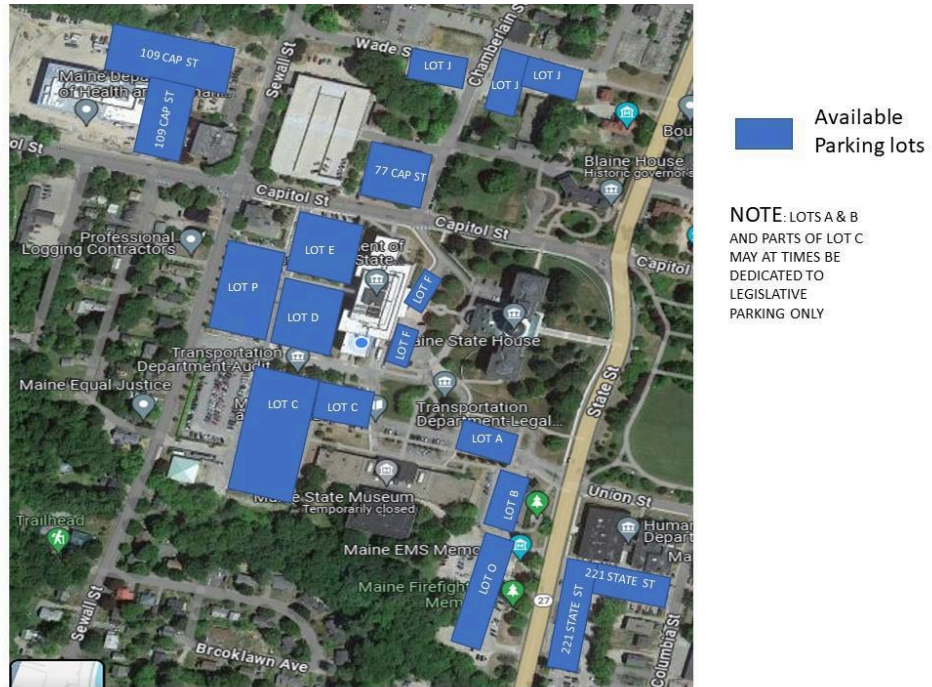
Parking:

There are a variety of places to park

- There is 2-hour and accessible parking right behind the Cross Building (Lot D and E on the map below).
- Please note that Lots A and B and sections of Lot C (per signage in Lot C) are reserved for Legislators. We apologize for the inconvenience and will continue to identify additional parking and EV charging resources.
- **The State Parking Garage at the corner of Sewall and Capitol Streets will be closed starting Tuesday, January 2, 2024, until further notice.**

- See the map of alternate parking options or visit <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bgs/home> to learn more about places to park.

Map:



L.D. 2167 Summary:

What does the bill do?

L.D. 2167 aligns well with our organization's mission of advocating for immigrants' rights and supporting their integration into the community. It addresses key aspects such as workforce opportunities, language learning, legal services, collaboration with stakeholders, and most importantly adds data collection. The establishment of the advisory council ensures diverse perspectives are considered.

Key Provisions:

- **Establishment of the Office of New Americans:** L.D. 2167 proposes the creation of the Office of New Americans within the Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. This office aims to improve the economic and civic integration of immigrants into the State's workforce and communities to strengthen the economy over the long term.
- **Director and Duties:** The director of the Office of New Americans will be responsible for hiring professional personnel, supervising and administering office affairs, determining the budget, and reporting on activities.

- **Duties of the Office of New Americans:** The office is tasked with identifying and addressing needs, barriers, and opportunities for supporting the long-term economic and civic integration of immigrants. This includes collecting and analyzing relevant data, coordinating with government agencies, serving as the State's primary liaison with external stakeholders, and promoting activities that enhance integration.
- **Activities:** The Office of New Americans is authorized to undertake activities such as strengthening workforce opportunities, improving access to English language learning programs, supporting legal services, partnering with municipalities and organizations, and participating in national networks for information and best practices.
- **Rulemaking:** The office may adopt rules for proper administration, and it is required to report biennially to the Governor and the Legislature.
- **Advisory Council:** An advisory council is established to advise the Office of New Americans on matters affecting the long-term economic and civic integration of immigrants. The council consists of members representing immigrants, various sectors, and diverse backgrounds.

Talking Points In Support of L.D. 2167:

MIRC supports the bipartisan L.D. 2167 establishing the Office of New Americans, recognizing its critical necessity driven by the substantial, diverse, and growing immigrant communities in the state.

- **Immigration** is an **important part** of this state's **economic growth strategy** and improving immigrant integration is critical to **ensuring Maine's workforce and vitality**.
- Designating an office specifically for New Mainers is largely viewed as exclusive, given the need to **improve economic opportunity** for youth, people of color, and other disadvantaged populations.
- The new Maine Office for New Americans will **support the integration of immigrants** into our state's economy, workforce, and communities. As Maine's demographics continue to shift, it is important to **address this proactively**. For generations, immigrants from all over the world have built Maine into what it is today. **Now, we will build on that tradition.**
- With the creation of this new state office, we have the **chance** to ensure this current generation of immigrants – whether they are refugees, asylees, asylum seekers, without status, or any other classification – will continue **to build our state into** “the way life should be.”
- Convene community resources to improve coordination, communication, and collaboration and avoid or decrease duplication of services.
- Create a common data collection tool, to better track outcomes across organizations.
- Focus on the unique needs of immigrants by ensuring the **availability** and **accessibility** of a wide range of English **language classes**.



MIRC believes that endorsing this bill is a vision of Maine where communities actively engage with and support immigrants, fostering a more inclusive and understanding environment. With co-sponsors from both sides of the aisle, L.D. 2167:

- Responds to the urgent need for **strategic collaboration**, ensuring the inclusion of diverse perspectives in addressing the unique needs of Maine's vibrant immigrant communities.
- Underlines the pivotal role of **strategic collaboration** in addressing the unique needs of Maine's immigrant communities. It emphasizes **strategic collaboration** for **effective resource utilization** and the establishment of a strong foundation for the Office of New Americans.
- Is a tangible force for **positive change**, effectively implementing outlined duties to enhance the lives of Maine's immigrants.
- Duties align with long-standing advocacy efforts of our coalition for **comprehensive data gathering, strategic coordination, and prioritizing the immediate needs of immigrants for effective integration.**
- For its potential to economically **empower immigrant communities, fostering pathways** for professional accreditation, career advancement, and increased employment opportunities.
- Prioritizes **strengthening workforce opportunities**, providing **guidance for professional accreditation and licensure**, and **engaging with businesses to enhance the employment, retention, and advancement of immigrant employees** aligning with our commitment to promoting the **economic vitality of Maine's** diverse communities.
- Embodies a commitment to **inclusive community building**, emphasizing the importance of **collaboration with local entities, educational institutions, and community-based organizations.**
- Encourages **partnerships** with municipalities, schools, educational institutions, and businesses, showcasing a commitment to **building inclusive communities** that support and integrate immigrants.