



October 10, 2021

To: MN Legislation

RE: ONA Office

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Minneapolis Regional Chamber, I want to take this opportunity to express my support for the establishment of the Minnesota Office for New Americans, which will promote inclusion and more equitable access to programs and services for the more than 472,000 immigrants and refugees who live in Minnesota.

In September 2020 the Minneapolis Regional Chamber, in partnership with the City of Minneapolis, applied for and was awarded the Gateways for Growth Challenge grant, making us one of only 19 communities chosen for this opportunity. As part of this award, we received a report from New American Economy detailing the economic contributions of immigrants and refugees in the City of Minneapolis. In 2019 alone, immigrants and refugees in the Minneapolis area held \$1.2 billion in spending power and paid over \$284 million in federal taxes and \$159 million in state and local taxes. This report also found that immigrants and refugees played a critical role in our city's ability to weather the pandemic - they made up 42% of the essential services workforce, 18% of healthcare workers, 18% of food service workers, 25% of transportation and warehousing workers and 15% of the essential retail trade workforce.

Another component to the Gateways for Growth work has been a partnership with the City of St. Paul and St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce (who also received a Gateways for Growth Challenge grant) to develop a multisector strategic plan to improve immigrant and refugee inclusion in the Twin Cities. The strategic planning process has given us the opportunity engage partner organizations and community members across the city to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations to improve immigrant and refugee inclusion in areas including civic engagement, government leadership, access to housing, healthcare, education workforce and economic development, education, amongst others. One of the primary concerns we've heard is a lack of centralized services for New Americans, and that is gap we believe the Office of New Americans can fill.

Our state's character is inseparable from the story of immigration, and we know immigration is a cornerstone of Minneapolis' economic competitiveness. That is why the Minneapolis Regional Chamber is pleased to lend our support to the creation of the Minnesota Office of New Americans, so that all Minnesotans have the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Weinhagen', written in a cursive style.

Jonathan Weinhagen
President & CEO
Minneapolis Regional Chamber