



March 6, 2022

Minnesota Senate Jobs Committee

Chair Champion, Lead Draheim, Senator Mohamed, and members

My name is Veena Iyer, and I am the Executive Director of the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota. For 25 years, we have supported over 40,000 Minnesotans on the pathway to citizenship through legal representation, education, and advocacy from our offices in Austin, Moorhead, Worthington, and here, in St. Paul.

We are proud to be a partner of the Office of New Americans and to support SF 360, which would make the office a permanent and consistent catalyst for increasing opportunity and prosperity for ALL Minnesotans.

With significant worker shortages in key sectors, Minnesota will be unable to sustain our economy—let alone grow—without harnessing the power of immigrants and refugees. The Office of New Americans will be a key driver of this growth by:

- coordinating efforts to support immigrant business owners and professionals who, as of 2018, constituted 7 percent of all self-employed Minnesotans and produced \$576.2 million in the state;
- coordinating training efforts to create professional pathway opportunities for more immigrants;
- developing strategies and technical support to reduce current economic disparities in the refugee and immigrant community;
- eliminating socioeconomic barriers for immigrant and refugee workers; and
- convening and coordinating governmental, nonprofit, and corporate stakeholders in efforts to support new Americans and fully integrate them into Minnesota's economy.

In 1867, Republican Minnesota Governor William Marshall created a Board of Immigration in 1867 to ensure that the immigrants of that time—mostly from Scandinavia and Northern Europe-- didn't just end up in any American state, but rather picked Minnesota. In short, early leaders recognized that the state's prosperity depended on immigrants and created an institution to focus on attracting, welcoming, and supporting them. 150 years later, we need to return to our roots as a state and establish a permanent Office of New Americans to ensure that prosperity is a characteristic of Minnesota's past AND future.

Regards,

/s/ Veena A. Iyer

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