



The Advocates for Human Rights supports public policy that ensures  
Minnesotans can live with dignity.

March 3, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

The Advocates for Human Rights supports the permanent establishment of an Office of New Americans. Under the leadership of Anisa Hajimumin, the Immigrant and Refugee Affairs Office within the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development has strengthened the inclusion of refugee and immigrant Minnesotans in the workforce. We believe a permanent office will yield additional benefit to our state.

The Advocates for Human Rights has worked to protect the human rights of refugees and immigrants in Minnesota for nearly 40 years. Each year we provide legal help to more than 1000 people, including people fleeing persecution, escaping human trafficking, or detained by federal immigration agencies and to unaccompanied children as they navigate the federal immigration bureaucracy. We currently are working in partnership with the State of Minnesota to welcome Afghan evacuees and ensure they can build stable futures in our community. The Advocates also documents human rights conditions experienced by refugees and immigrants. Our immigration court observation project, which has engaged more than 700 volunteer court observers in the past five years, builds on earlier work to eliminate bias against refugees and immigrants in Minnesota.

The global community increasingly recognizes the need to ensure the safety and dignity of people in migration. The UN Global Compact for Migration emphasizes that migration has been part of the human experience throughout history. It calls for public policy that promotes the well-being of migrants and the members of communities in countries of origin, transit, and destination, and for policies that empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion.

The creation of a Minnesota Office of New Americans will not only allow the 472,000 immigrants and refugees who live in Minnesota to feel included, but it is also an effective step toward the promotion and protection of human rights in migration. The Office of New Americans will serve as a bridge between long-time citizens and new Americans while nurturing values like inclusion and equity. The State of Minnesota is a welcoming one, and it is a home to

many migrants, which means an Office of New Americans will complement the vibrant network of organizations which serves new Americans in the state.

In our report, [Moving from Exclusion to Belonging: Immigrant Rights in Minnesota Today](#), released nearly a decade ago, we wrote:

“Immigrants and refugees report barriers to belonging in Minnesota that result from discrimination, social distance, exclusion from the greater community, and fear. These barriers lead to human rights violations that impact safety and security and that undermine immigrants’ ability to earn a living and to meet their basic needs. The failure to protect these fundamental human rights undermines Minnesotan values and squanders the rich resources that Minnesota’s newcomers bring. Public policy must guarantee that all people who live in Minnesota, regardless of where they were born or what their immigration status is, enjoy the fundamental human rights that allow them to live with dignity.”

A permanent Office of New Americans is an important step toward ensuring Minnesota continues as a leader in upholding human rights of migrants and being a welcoming state.

Sincerely,



Michele Garnett McKenzie  
Deputy Director

#### **The Advocates for Human Rights**

Founded in 1983 by Minnesotans who recognized the state’s unique spirit of social justice, The Advocates for Human Rights works in our home community and in partnerships worldwide to end violence against women, abolish the death penalty, protect the rights of migrants, and build the human rights movement. Governed by a 27-member board of directors, The Advocates is a volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.