



February 15, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

Under the leadership of Anisa Hajimumin, the Immigrant and Refugee Affairs Office at the Department of Employment and Economic Development has contributed to and strengthened the inclusion of communities of color in the Minnesota workforce. Moving forward, Minnesota needs an Office of New Americans to continue engaging and supporting immigrants and refugees in Minnesota. The Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota strongly supports the permanent establishment of an Office of New Americans and full funding of the office.

The Office of New Americans is critical to ensure economic growth for the state and economic 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;
- advising state legislators and administrators and maximizing the return-on-investment for funds available for immigrant and refugee communities, such as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds;
- eliminating socioeconomic barriers for immigrant and refugee professionals; and
- convening and coordinating governmental, nonprofit, and corporate stakeholders in efforts to support new Americans and fully integrate them into Minnesota's economy.

The Office of New Americans will continue to provide guidance and instrumental support towards the economic and community integration of immigrants and refugees. We respectfully request that the legislature fully and permanently fund the Office of New Americans. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 651-238-4525.

Regards,

/s/ Veena A. Iyer

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