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To Whom It May Concern:

I am an Assistant City Attorney with the City of Saint Paul, and I am charged with developing and managing the City's Immigrant and Refugee Affairs Program. I am familiar with the demographics and contributions that New Americans make in Minnesota, and I am writing in support of the establishment of the Minnesota Office of New Americans as proposed in MN DEED's supplemental budget request.

The New American population in Minnesota is significant. In 2021 the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce studied the economic impact of immigration in Minnesota finding that:

- Minnesota's immigrant population totals 427,849 representing 8.5% of the state's population, meaning one in 12 Minnesotans is foreign-born",
- Between 1990 and 2018 the state's immigrant population grew by over 300%.

See: [The Economic Contributions of Immigrants in Minnesota: Demographic analysis | Minnesota Chamber of Commerce \(mnchamber.com\)](#).

The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce study also found that immigrants' economic contribution to Minnesota included:

- Immigrant spending power is over \$12.4 billion annually, while immigrant households paid \$4.5 billion in taxes in 2019.
- Immigrants in Minnesota have higher rates of labor force participation than the native-born population.
- Minnesota's workforce is increasingly made up of foreign-born workers. Educational attainment among immigrants is concentrated on the far ends of the spectrum, while educational attainment among the native-born population is concentrated in the middle, allowing immigrants to complement the native-born workforce well.
- Immigrants are an important link to the world economy.

See: [Economic contributions—Consumers, human capital, taxpayers, link to the world economy | Minnesota Chamber of Commerce \(mnchamber.com\)](#)

And the Minnesota Chamber's study concluded the following with regard to immigrant entrepreneurs in Minnesota:

- Immigrant entrepreneurship in Minnesota lags the rest of the nation.
- The state's historically low unemployment, and high labor participation rates and job opportunities may be contributing factors, resulting in less entrepreneurship and startup activity. Minnesota's comparatively younger immigrant population and immigrants' higher education attainment levels are additional considerations.
- Access to financial capital is a major barrier for immigrants eager to start a business.
- As a primarily "homegrown" economy, rates of entrepreneurship in Minnesota are important to long-term economic success.
- Building the systems that support immigrant entrepreneurs now is important to the development of the current and future economy.

See: [Economic contributions through entrepreneurship | Minnesota Chamber of Commerce \(mnchamber.com\)](https://www.mnchamber.com)

Similarly, Immigrants also play a significant role in the economic and social fabric of Saint Paul. In 2021 the New American Economy in partnership with the City of Saint Paul and the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce published a report on New Americans in Saint Paul and the East Metro Area. That report found that:

- By 2019, Saint Paul's immigrant population had jumped to 60,500 representing 19.9% of the City's population, meaning that one in 5 people living in Saint Paul was born outside the United States.
- Between 2014 and 2019, Saint Paul's population increased by 4.4%. The immigrant population during that same period grew by 15.2%. resulting in 62.4% of the total population growth in Saint Paul during this period being attributable to immigrants.
- Immigrants and refugees in the Saint Paul area make up 35.3 percent of manufacturing workers, 39.2 percent of essential service workers, and 33.2 percent of the business owners.

See: [G4G St.-Paul Report-9.2.21-2.pdf \(newamericaneconomy.org\)](https://www.newamericaneconomy.org)

These studies show that immigrants populations have significantly grown in recent decades and that immigrants make substantial contributions to Minnesota's social, economic, and cultural life. Immigrants in Minnesota contribute to a wide variety of industries and economic sectors. Our States economic stability and growth will only be strengthened and fostered by developing an infrastructure that connects Minnesota employers with this growing immigrant workforce and supports the businesses New Americans create. Creating an Office of New Americans is one significant way to develop this infrastructure and will enable Minnesota to assist these New Americans to thrive and prosper and will advance economic, cultural and social opportunities for all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,

Edmundo D. Lijo  
Assistant City Attorney