



Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative Summer 2024 Update

Dear Friend,

All of us at the Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative are grateful for your support of the immigrant community. We are happy to share with you this update on our programs, and words from our partners about what the Collaborative means to them. We hope you enjoy the rest of your summer.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Since the Collaborative started in 2020, we have relied on the generosity of funders for emergency assistance that is passed on to our partners to support their community members. While our focus and programs have expanded, emergency assistance remains a critical need for many. This type of direct assistance usually takes two forms: hunger relief and direct cash assistance.

Over 2000 people have received hunger relief this year from M.I.C. partners including Pioneer Valley Workers Center (PVWC). According to Ariana at PVWC, “We have the highest attendance at our food distribution events during the winter months. Many of our members work seasonal jobs in agriculture and experience greater food insecurity in the colder weather when they are without work. Recently, we have observed an increase in the number of new arrivals to Western Massachusetts, primarily from Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Nicaragua. [Food distribution] plays a significant role in the emergency safety net active in Western Massachusetts to support both newly arriving immigrants and immigrants who have been

residing in Massachusetts for years.”

Direct cash assistance can help people in urgent circumstances most commonly with rent, food and utilities. In the first half of 2024 we supported 208 people in this way. Ruth from M.I.C. partner Immigrant Family Services Institute (IFSI) shares how this assistance has helped their community.

“Upon arriving in Boston, many new immigrants struggle to find housing, especially when they are waiting for their Employment Authorization Documents. The funds we received helped us to partially cover rent for eight recent immigrant clients for one month. “Pierre”, for example, arrived in February. He had just finished an undergraduate degree in agronomy in Haiti when things began to get more dangerous in his neighborhood and he could not find work anywhere. He had no choice but to flee the area. He made his way through Central America, arriving at the border early this year. Luckily, Pierre was able to enter the country and received employment authorization. Having emergency assistance for that first month’s rent provided critical shelter while Pierre was looking for work.”

CENTRALIZED LEGAL SERVICES

Understanding how immigration law affects you and your family; and gaining or maintaining legal status can have a powerful impact. The Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative works with four legal partners; [Agencia ALPHA](#), [Immigrant Family Services Institute](#); [Rian Immigrant Center](#), and [Mabel Center for Immigrant Justice](#) whose immigration attorneys and accredited legal representatives provide immigration legal services to families and individuals who could not otherwise afford legal guidance.

So far this year we have provided 314 consultations, and full legal representation to over 100 people referred to the program by our partners. Common cases included eligible clients applying for or renewing work permits, and clients registering or re-registering for Temporary Protected Status. In some situations, simply having a pending case can lead to a work permit, enabling the individual to find employment.

Some can apply for permanent residency and eventually citizenship, preventing deportation and providing an opportunity to petition for family members to join them in the US. For

some people, including asylees, this can be life-saving. Says the Collaborative's Immigration Legal Services Program Manager Anna Flores-Amper, "Immigration status can also lead to more intangible impacts. It can improve mental health, reducing stress and anxiety. It's a huge ripple effect."

Through an interpreter, Anna spoke with one client, "Jing" who was referred by partner Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center and is working with Rian's Department of Justice Accredited Representative Jonah Hahn. Said Jing, "[it is] easier to have Jonah help me. I cannot complete [this immigration application] by myself. Thank you Jonah!"

Jonah responded, "Jing has endured tremendous pain and overcome much adversity. She is eligible for certain benefits now, and we were able to submit a work permit application. Every phone call she expresses gratitude and appreciation for the support [we have] provided her."

Through the Collaborative's Centralized Immigration Legal Services Jing now has a pathway that can make a difference for her and her children.

ADVOCACY

A number of our partners are engaged in advancing policies or legislation that promote immigrant rights. Treatment of immigrants in the workplace is a particular concern for several of our partners and they are advocating for worker's rights (for all workers), including [An Act to Protect Injured Workers](#) and [Fairness for Farmworkers Act](#).

At our regular meetings, our partners

educate each other about issues they are working on or concerned about and at times, the Collaborative will submit letters of support. We also invite other organizations and government agencies in our network to attend partner meetings and share their community's challenges, or issues they are working on so we can all stay informed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: IMMIGRANT ECONOMIC RECOVERY INITIATIVE

A partnership between the Collaborative and the City of Boston Equity and Inclusion Cabinet, the **Immigrant Economic Recovery Initiative** is a year-long program empowering 200 participants, from a range of cultures, countries of origin, and Boston neighborhoods. Participants receive monthly basic needs assistance, opportunity cost funding for language and workforce training; and a household savings match. A dedicated case manager facilitates access to educational opportunities, assists with opening bank accounts, and helps with goal-setting.

Leah Zallman Center, a non-profit specializing in immigration research, has been engaged to track the longer-term impacts of this program on financial empowerment and mental and physical wellbeing. Meanwhile, program participants share their thoughts on how the program impacts them.

“... I am so glad I came across this program. I wasn’t working, things were very difficult. This ... assistance has helped my family

tremendously to pay rent, buy food and save some money. My goal is to become an electrical engineer. This program gives me hope and will put me on the right path to continue the professional career I had back home in Haiti.” - Serge

“Since I began participating in this program my life has changed. Before, I had difficulty with rent payments, groceries and other things. The money I receive every month covers a part of [my bills]. [Today], I'm taking classes at Roxbury Community College, where I took English class and some college classes. My goal is to get my degree in nursing. I would like to thank all of the staff who helped us. May God bless each of you.” - Esther

The program helps me in many ways. Before the program I did not have enough to pay bills and save money. The monthly check, it's a big relief. Now I am working towards my goal with hope ... that one day I will have a better career and save enough to buy my house. Thank you! - Judith

SHARED CAPACITY BUILDING

Collaboration and relationships continue to build among leaders and staff members of partner organizations. The process is facilitated in part through our remote bi-weekly partner meetings and weekly meetings of the Steering Committee. In these settings we share experience and

insights, work on collective strategy and make decisions on our joint programs. The resulting relationships developed in these group forums often foster one-on-one follow up on many topics including personal leadership development and coaching around agency specific challenges.

OUR PARTNERS

The [Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative](#) includes 15 partner organizations statewide, working in solidarity with under-resourced immigrant communities. Together, we share ideas, experience, resources and support each other in our work.

**[Click here and see what our partners are saying about the
Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative.](#)**



You can learn more about our partners by visiting their websites.

[Agencia ALPHA](#)

[Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center](#)

[Boston International Newcomers Academy](#)

[Brazilian Worker Center](#)

[Caribbean Youth Club](#)

[Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores](#)

[Centro Presente](#)

[Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative](#)

[ICNA Relief](#)

[Immigrant Family Services Institute](#)

[MetroWest Workers Center: Casa](#)

[New North Citizen Council](#)

[Pioneer Valley Workers Center](#)

[Rian Immigrant Center](#)

[Sociedad Latina](#)