

A Message From the CEO



WHAT WE TOO OFTEN HEAR in public discourse, especially during election campaigns, is the false narrative that immigration is a “crisis;” that New England, one of the wealthiest areas of the wealthiest country in the world, lacks the resources to support new arrivals; that welcoming others means taking things from those already here, and that the solution is to forcefully turn people away.

Part of IINE’s longstanding advocacy work is making the case at every level that our experience proves the opposite to be true. Resettlement is a truly communal, collaborative process, and success requires building support from property owners, neighbors, businesses, and decisionmakers on the city, state, and federal levels. That’s why for as long as we’ve been doing the work of resettlement, we’ve also prioritized advocacy.

We’ve been reminded of this recently while **exploring our history in celebration of our centennial year in Boston**. IINE has worked to win rights for immigrants and keep our borders open since our founding in the early 20th century when the Boston office was known as the International Insitute of Boston (IIB). In this edition of *Spotlight*, we’ll highlight some of our



Members of the Boston City Council and Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Advancement attended IINE’s World Refugee Day celebration in Boston this past June, which included an ESOL class graduation and an opportunity to speak with staff and immigrants about their experiences.

key efforts to lead coalitions, secure resources, affect legislation, and share our clients’ stories.

Thank you for joining us and raising your voice in support of our newest neighbors.



Jeffrey Thielman, President and CEO

“IINE has worked to win rights for immigrants and keep our borders open since our founding.”

—JEFF THIELMAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO

How We Advocate Today

AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

IINE's **blog** and social media posts feature positive stories, public statements, news, myth-busting, and calls-to-action. **Suitcase Stories**® events, featuring live storytelling by newcomers and their family members, help to build empathy and support. Quarterly virtual "Town Hall" events invite supporters to learn about issues and ask questions. In-person presentations to community groups provide context, testimonials, and calls for support.

AT THE CITY LEVEL

IINE invites mayors and city councilors to our sites to see our work and meet our clients. They participate in welcoming events like World Refugee Day and Haitian Flag Day.

AT THE STATE LEVEL

IINE leads coalitions of fellow refugee resettlement agencies in advocating for funding and legislation that supports refugees and immigrants and opposing legislation that could harm them.

As a member of the Advisory Council of the **Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)**, IINE supports community education and mobilization efforts. A recent success was the passage of the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law, which grants undocumented students access to in-state tuition and state financial aid at public colleges and universities.

AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

IINE regularly partners with our national network, the **U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)**, in speaking out publicly about the need to protect asylum and provide pathways to citizenship for persecuted immigrants.



IINE leadership speaks with N.H. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (top) and MA Senator Edward Markey (bottom) during a trip to D.C.

We recently joined USCRI staff on a trip to the U.S.-Mexico border to learn about and report on conditions there.

This year, we made two eventful trips to D.C. to speak directly with decision-makers. Members of our Leadership team met with a White House official, senators, congress members, congressional staffers, and senior leaders from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement to explain the support needed to serve the highest number of refugees, humanitarian parolees, and unaccompanied children in our recent history.

Shortly afterward, representatives of our Refugee Youth Mentoring program took their own trip to D.C. to participate in the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Youth Leadership Council for Refugees and Newcomers. IINE brought the most delegates of all agencies because of our exceptional applications. Our youth were commended for proposing workable solutions to challenges affecting them.



Refugee youth took a trip to D.C. to visit national sites, meet with political officials, and present on resettlement-related issues and solutions.

Q & A with IINE's New Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, Bill Gillett



Q: What is your role as Director of Public Policy & Advocacy?

A: This is a new role for IINE, created based on our significant growth and influence over the last several years as we have continued to meet the needs of immigrants arriving here displaced by war and political turmoil. In the role, I track state and federal legislation that affects refugees and immigrants in Massachusetts and New Hampshire and across New England and New York City and provide input to policy decision-makers—making sure that when they're considering policy, they know the facts about our clients' needs, strengths, and the benefits they bring to their communities and the workforce. The role also includes building public support for IINE, and for the overall cause of resettlement and immigration, including coordinating with other agencies to make sure that our messaging to the public is consistent, and that our dealings with legislators are efficient.

Q: What's your history with IINE and how did you come to this role?

A: I was on the Board of Directors as first a member and then chair way back in 2008 (when IINE was much smaller) bringing New Hampshire perspective and connections to the table.

At the time, Manchester Mayor Ted Gatsas decided it would be politically advantageous to prey on people's suspicions about newcomers and fears that welcoming people meant having things taken away from them, by proposing a two-year moratorium on settling refugees in the city. I worked with other IINE Board members, federal representatives, and other agencies to convince the members of the Executive Council, who approve the state's budget, as well as the New Hampshire Senate, that this was a baseless and harmful plan. They agreed.

After my service on IINE's Board, while my work in business and higher education took me in and out of the country, I remained on IINE's Leadership Council and stayed very interested in immigration issues. IINE's growth and the increasing public focus on immigration, including the misinformation now permeating the national and state debates, reiterated to me how important the work of IINE is to Massachusetts and New Hampshire. This year felt like the right time to come back and do what I can to help.

Q: What key issues and legislation is IINE currently focused on?

A: Well, this may change quickly—but one of the first things I did in this role was to address a bill being proposed in the New Hampshire Senate to make immigrants, even those authorized to live and work in the state, acquire permanent residence or citizenship before they can get driver's licenses. The rationale given by the bill's sponsors was that letting non-citizens have driver's licenses would give them an avenue to vote. This was a response to a non-problem as there have been only a handful of incidents nationally of such activity. Refugees and asylees are here legally and are authorized to work, we need them in the workforce, and they can't get to work without driving. The police, DMV, and employers all want to make sure these residents learn the rules of the road and can contribute to the state's economy.

Working with partners, I explained this to some key senators and then testified before the senate committee considering the bill. The amendment was relegated for "further study," meaning it is on hold at least for now.

Q: How about in Massachusetts?

A: Right now, there's a lot of focus on the many immigrant families living in emergency shelters and overflow sites. The shelters are at capacity, and we all want these families to get into permanent housing and move towards self-sufficiency quickly and sustainably. The eight Massachusetts-based resettlement agencies have been given some funding by the state to help with this, but it's a very challenging and complicated task involving a tangle of intermediaries, a very sparse affordable housing market, and rapidly changing rules around how long people can stay in various short-term shelters.

This is a problem that can only be solved with cooperation and communication. IINE is taking the lead in coordinating the resettlement agencies involved and is the spokesperson in representing the needs of our clients to the press and lawmakers. We're conveying what families communicate to us, trying to make sure everyone understands their needs and experiences, and trying to give them the necessary support so they can move into a phase of basic safety and security, supporting themselves and helping to strengthen our communities.

100 Years of Advocacy in Boston

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR CENTENNIAL BLOG SERIES

1938-41 IIB successfully lobbies against proposed bills to deport immigrants on relief and create prison camps for those who cannot be deported.

1943 IIB lobbies for repeal of Chinese Exclusion Act.

1945 IIB supports MA Fair Employment Act creating MA Committee against Discrimination.

1952 IIB lobbies against restricting immigration by country (quota system).

1958 Testimony from Armenian group founded at IIB leads to Public Law 86/363, granting many new visas unrestricted by quotas.

1961 IIB writes to JFK urging comprehensive immigration reform, including end of quotas. Requests ultimately met in the major reform bill of 1965.

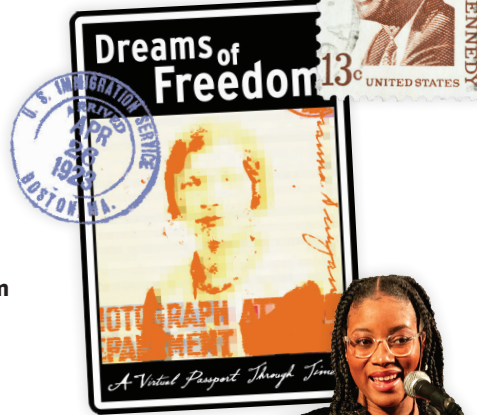
1987 IIB works with other agencies to found Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA).

2000 IIB opens the Dreams of Freedom Museum to deepen education and understanding of refugees' experiences.

2001 After 9/11, IIB works with Arab American community and BPD to build support and resources for those who feel unsafe.

2002-2005 IINE co-hosts Human Rights Film Fest in Boston.

2017 Suitcase Stories® launches to build empathy and support for immigrants and refugees.



Recent Impact Numbers

\$10.5 MILLION secured for resettlement agencies from MA legislature in late 2023 to help both refugees and immigrants in shelter move to permanent housing.

\$7 MILLION secured in the MA supplemental budget adopted in April of 2024 to provide services for families in shelters.

NH HB 1118 DEFEATED, preventing ban on many immigrants getting driver's licenses in N.H.

DESTINATION RECEPTION ASSISTANCE ACT introduced by Sen. E. Markey (D-MA) to fund state level efforts to accommodate influxes of immigrants by helping them achieve self-sufficiency, incorporating input from our D.C. visit.



How You Can Help

SPEAK OUT Be a voice for newcomers at your local town meeting.

DEBUNK MISINFORMATION Myths about immigrants spread fast. Follow our blog and social media to learn the facts—and use them to push back!

SHARE YOUR FAMILY'S STORIES Non-indigenous American families were once newcomers who struggled, survived, needed support, and gave back.

CONTACT YOUR REPS Ask them to protect asylum, welcome refugees, extend Temporary Protected Status, fund resettlement, and increase pathways to citizenship.

VOTE Support leaders who commit to immigrant rights.

DONATE [Fuel our efforts](#) to educate, organize, and amplify.



International Institute of New England

BOSTON
2 Boylston Street, 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02116
617-695-9990

LOWELL
101 Jackson Street, 2nd Floor
Lowell, MA 01852
978-459-9031

MANCHESTER
470 Pine Street, Lower Level
Manchester, NH 03104
603-647-1500