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**THE IMMIGRANT LEARNING CENTER, INC.
CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF GIVING THE GIFT OF LANGUAGE
TO IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE ADULTS**
MassINC Cites Importance of ILC Students to State's Economy

Malden, Mass – Illustrating the need for expanded English literacy services, The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC) marked 10 years of providing Massachusetts immigrant and refugee adults with adequate knowledge of the English language to lead better lives and become productive workers, parents and community members.

The anniversary was recently held at the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum in Boston with more than 250 guests in attendance that included business and community leaders and elected officials.

The Malden-based, not-for-profit adult learning center was founded in 1992 to address the language needs of the exploding immigrant and refugee population that settled in the Greater Boston community during the 1980's and throughout the 1990's. Co-founded by a former Adult Basic Education (ABE) teacher and ABE guidance counselor, The ILC began with 60 students and three classrooms located above a drug store in Malden. Since its inception, The ILC has served nearly 3,000 individuals representing 65 countries, more than 58 Greater Boston communities and speaking 40 different languages. The school now occupies more than 9,000 square feet of classroom and office space in its present location at 442 Main Street.

Congressman Edward J. Markey, an early supporter of the school, was one of three honorees. Joan Broude, ILC co-founder, and Patrick F. Donelan, eSecLending (Europe) Ltd., life-time member of The ILC Board of Trustees, were also singled out for establishing a strong foundation upon which the school has thrived.

“Immigrant families entering our country are faced with the daunting task of not only learning the nuances of the English language and American culture, but also acquiring the skills that will allow them to compete for the jobs of the 21st century's new economy,” said Congressman Markey. “Through the incredible hard work and passion of all those involved in this amazing institution, The Immigrant Learning Center has provided thousands of immigrant families with the instruction to help them capture their ‘American Dream.’ By democratizing access to educational opportunity, the Center serves as a national model for the rest of our country. I am proud of my affiliation with The Immigrant Learning Center, and I am honored by this award.”

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"Immigrants have always been the lifeblood of the Massachusetts economy, but at the dawn of the 21st century, we find ourselves dependent on them more than ever," said Tripp Jones, executive director of MassINC and keynote speaker. "Helping today's immigrants achieve the American Dream is a challenge Massachusetts can meet, because we have places like The Immigrant Learning Center leading the way. Their efforts make us a better, stronger commonwealth."

According to a report funded by MassINC, more than a third (1.1 million) of Massachusetts' 3.2 million workers are ill equipped to meet the demands of the state's rapidly changing economy. This threatens the state's ability to sustain growth and traps the workers themselves in jobs with little opportunity to advance at the level considered acceptable for the typical 21st century workplace. The report describes a "language challenge" based on the presence of immigrant workers with severely limited English speaking skills. With labor shortages in critical occupations already beginning to threaten economic growth and erode the state's competitive edge, addressing the language challenge, Jones says, is more important than ever to the future of our state.

Massachusetts is home to more than 710,000 immigrants and refugees, the seventh largest immigrant population in the country, of which approximately 426,000 do not speak English. More than 16,000 residents in the Malden community speak a language other than English at home. Linguists say it takes five to seven years to become proficient in English and 500 to 1,000 hours of instruction.

The Immigrant Learning Center operates year-round and provides free classes in English as a Second Language, Adult Basic Education, Family Literacy, Computer Literacy, and Citizenship, GED (high school equivalency), and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) examination preparation. Classes are offered to all Massachusetts immigrant and refugee adults regardless of income, education, race, ethnicity, religion, residency, native country, disability or other eligibility restrictions. The school is fully enrolled with 320 students and maintains a waiting list of more than 500 individuals at any given time.

"The ILC is proud of its ten-year history in creating possibilities for thousands of immigrant and refugee adults through the gift of language," said Diane Portnoy, ILC co-founder and director. "Joan [Broude] and I started the school with \$100,000 in private funding, a dream and a lot of determination to succeed. We are grateful to our board of trustees, private, public, and community partners, donors, and staff who believe in this mission, as we do, and invest their resources, time and energy into these adults."

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