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Diane Portnoy

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Governor Proclaims First Ever "Immigrant Entrepreneurship Month"

The Month-Long Celebration Honors the Significant Contribution of Immigrant Business Owners in Massachusetts

BOSTON, October 21, 2011 / Today, Governor Deval Patrick proclaimed October 14, 2011, through November 14, 2011, the first "Immigrant Entrepreneurship Month." The Governor began his remarks by saying, "We are one community." He went on to stress the importance of calling attention to the significant role that immigrants play in the health and expansion of our economy. He noted, for example, "Latino and Asian businesses alone employ 50,000 people and generate more than $7 billion in sales here in the Commonwealth."

Three immigrant entrepreneurs who spoke about their origins and businesses were introduced by Dr. Marcia Hohn, director of the Public Education Institute at The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC). She noted that, "Immigrants create businesses in Massachusetts ranging from storefront businesses that revitalize neighborhoods to growth businesses that create new jobs to high-tech companies that drive innovation in the state. The immigrant entrepreneurs that are here today were drawn from our [The ILC Public Education Institute's] research and conferences about immigrant entrepreneurship in Massachusetts."

Jill Cheng, owner, Cheng & Tsui Publishers, described her journey as both a newcomer to the United States and an entrepreneur. "What this country uniquely provides its immigrants are the freedom and opportunities in a stable and peaceful setting to pursue whatever they want as long as they are willing to work hard." Describing her fellow immigrant entrepreneurs, she went on to say, "I see among many immigrant entrepreneur acquaintances a feeling of tremendous gratitude for the opportunities we've had. We have tried to pay back to our communities in different ways often through our volunteer work and philanthropy."

Vinit Nijhawan, high-tech entrepreneur and executive-in-residence, Boston University, described his reason for coming to the United States 25 years ago this way, "I came here because this was the center of technology entrepreneurship in the world. It still is and that's why I'm still here." He went on to talk about the important role immigrants play in keeping the lead. "About two-thirds of STEM [science, technology, engineering and math] graduate students are foreign-born."

Finally, Javier Marin, owner, Hispanic News Press, expressed his gratitude to the Governor and all those present for recognizing immigrant entrepreneurs' contributions by saying, "To be able, in these times when anti-immigration is everywhere, to proclaim an immigrant entrepreneurship month is so positive. It makes me feel so proud."

As part of this month-long celebration, The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. will hold a special event "The Role of Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Strengthening the U.S. Economy" at Babson College on November 17,

2011, at 10:00 a.m. More details about this event as well as ongoing Immigrant Entrepreneurship Month updates will be available at http://www.ilctr.org/promoting-immigrants/iemonth.

About The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.
The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC) of Malden, Mass is a not-for-profit organization that helps immigrants and refugees become successful workers, parents and community members through direct service programs and public education. Our direct service program provides free year-round English classes to immigrant and refugee adults in Greater Boston. The ILC further supports immigrants through the Public Education Institute, which informs Americans about the economic and social contributions of immigrants in our society. For more information visit http://www.ilctr.org.

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