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New Study Reveals Detailed Portrait of Immigrants in Massachusetts

MALDEN, Mass, May 16, 2012 / A new study of the immigrant population in Massachusetts was discussed yesterday at a briefing held at the Massachusetts State House. The study entitled *Massachusetts Immigrants by the Numbers, Second Edition: Demographic Characteristics and Economic Footprint* was commissioned by The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. and presented by the study's authors, Dr. Paul Watanabe and Dr. Alan Clayton-Matthews, to an audience of nearly 50 legislative aides and members of community organizations and consulates.

Watanabe, director of the Institute for Asian American Studies and associate professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts Boston, explained the purpose of the study. "A lot of people want to have conversations that include everything but data when it comes to discussing immigration in Massachusetts," he said. "This report provides a common set of data to inform the debate about immigration. ... There is power behind these numbers. Remember, there are people and households behind these numbers." Watanabe shared some demographic highlights from the study as follows:

Massachusetts Municipalities with the Highest Percentage of Foreign-born (25 percent or more, in descending order)

Chelsea, Malden, Lawrence, Everett, Randolph, Revere, Lynn, Quincy, Cambridge, Boston, Somerville, Waltham and Framingham

Top Countries of Birth of Massachusetts Immigrants (in descending order)

Brazil, China, Dominican Republic, Portugal, India, Haiti, Vietnam, Canada, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cape Verde and Russia

Age Distribution

Immigrants in Massachusetts are much more likely than the native born to be between 24 and 45 years of age (41.9 percent of immigrants compared to 24.6 percent of natives). Watanabe noted that this is perhaps the most important demographic characteristic because this age range is critical to populating the work force and making the investments necessary to serve the older population as the baby boom generation retires.

Education

Immigrants are overrepresented on the low and high ends of the education scale. For example, 24.3 percent of all immigrants have less than a high school education compared to only 8.1 percent of natives. At the other end of the scale, 34.6 percent of all doctorate degrees are held by immigrants.

Clayton-Matthews, associate professor in the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs at Northeastern University, presented the economic footprint of immigrants in Massachusetts. He concluded that immigrants, especially established immigrants who have been here for 10 years or more, are economically very similar to the native-born saying, "The most important number to remember is 14. Immigrants represent 14 percent of the Massachusetts population and because their earnings, tax payments and use of social services are similar to the native-born, all of those percentages hover around 14 percent." He shared highlights from the economic section of the study as follows:

Income

Overall, immigrants' average income is 88.3 percent of natives'. However, established immigrants earn 95.9% while recent immigrants earn 69.1 percent of the average native's income.

Occupations

The occupation distribution of immigrants in Massachusetts follows the education distribution with immigrants most concentrated in high- and low-skill occupations. Immigrants are most concentrated in building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; production; life, physical and social science; computer and mathematical; and health care support.

Taxes

While immigrants earn less than natives on average, they are more likely to be in the workforce (73 percent have earned income compared to 70.5 percent of natives) and are more likely to pay income tax (immigrant-headed households represent 15.8 percent of the population and 16.7 percent of state income tax filers). The net result is that immigrants provide 14.0 percent of Massachusetts income tax. They also pay 14.3 percent of Massachusetts' sales and excise taxes, and 15.3 percent of property taxes.

The full study is available for free on The Immigrant Learning Center's website at <http://www.ilctr.org>.

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 the website <http://www.ilctr.org> and Facebook page <http://www.fb.com/ImmigrantLearningCenter>.

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