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*Diane Portnoy*

*Founder and CEO*

## **The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. supports the first annual Immigrant Heritage Month**

### **Celebration of immigrant heritage to take place June 21, 2014**

MALDEN, Mass, June 16, 2014 / Today, The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC) of Malden, Mass. announced its support of the first Immigrant Heritage Month, which was declared by Governor Deval Patrick in June 2014. Immigrant Heritage Month is a nationwide initiative spearheaded by the not-for-profit Welcome.us in partnership with corporations, media outlets, organizations, celebrities, and faith, civic and political leaders to gather and share inspirational stories of American immigrants.

“The Immigrant Learning Center is very proud to partner with Welcome.us on this initiative,” said Founder and CEO Diane Portnoy. “It aligns perfectly with The ILC’s mission to give immigrants a voice. Whether first, fifth or fifteenth generation, most Americans share an immigrant heritage. This month of celebration reminds us to be grateful for the sacrifices immigrants have made and all the ways they have enhanced our society.”

The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. has partnered with Welcome.us, the City of Cambridge, the City of Boston and many local community organizations to host an Immigrant Heritage Celebration at the Boston Public Library in Copley Square on June 21 from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. This free event offers food, entertainment and educational opportunities for all ages as well as interactive exhibits for Massachusetts residents to celebrate their own immigrant heritage.

Two local business owners will speak about their experiences as immigrants and their contributions to Massachusetts’ future. Saul Perlera, owner of Saul Perlera Real Estate in East Boston, came to the U.S. from El Salvador at age 16. He went from working three jobs to owning his own business and employing others. Bettina Hein, founder and CEO of Pixability, Inc., came to the U.S. from Germany to study at MIT. Her second start-up, Pixability, a software company that helps businesses succeed on YouTube. She is also the founder of the SheEOs, a Boston area networking and professional support group of 130 female founders and CEOs.

Massachusetts residents can participate in Immigrant Heritage Month at the June 21 celebration through social media and by sharing their own unique immigration history on the Welcome.us website. The themes of the month are:

- \* Telling the story of American immigrant ancestry
- \* Highlighting immigrant contributions to the economy and culture
- \* Celebrating modern immigrant families
- \* Honoring immigrants who serve our nation in the armed forces and through civil service

Tolu Olubunmi, executive director of Welcome.us, provided national context for the celebration in Boston:

“In the United States, with a good idea and enough hard work, anything is possible. The entrepreneurial spirit of our country is built on our diversity of origins. It is what drew the first people to the U.S. and what

continues to drive American business. American success is a result of our many distinct experiences, not in spite of it.

Our goal is to encourage as many Americans as possible to tell the story of how they first felt welcomed to the American experience. Our history and stories will help determine our future. At Welcome.us, we want everyone here to be a part of that history.”

**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>.

**About Welcome.us**

Welcome.us, a new non-profit organization, is dedicated to celebrating a United States that is fueled by immigrants from around the world. Led by Tolu Olubunmi, an immigrant and DREAMer, the organization is focused on launching the Welcome.us campaign and establishing Immigrant Heritage Month to honor the ways in which American and the immigrants who have built our country are linked in a shared, productive history. Welcome.us is supported by FWD.us, which was founded by Mark Zuckerberg, Marissa Mayer, Reid Hoffman, Bill Gates, Padmasree Warrior and other tech leaders. Our Honorary Board for Immigrant Heritage Month includes: Congressman Valadao, Congressman Crowley, Congressman Honda, Congressman Polis, Jared Leto, Russell Simmons, Jamie Lee Curtis, Michael Bolton and Kenny G. Learn more about the campaign and Immigrant Heritage Month by visiting Welcome.us.

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