

**Immigrant & Refugee Employment Services Program Testifies to Senate Committee**

**March 4, 2009** - Lifetrack Resources' Immigrant & Refugee employment services testified today at the Senate Economic Development and Housing Budget Division on behalf of our refunding proposal that would allow Lifetrack to continue our work with immigrants and refugees for two more years. Below is a copy of the remarks from the program manager and two client's testimony.

**Dagim Gameda, Lifetrack Immigrant & Refugee Program Manager  
Opening Remarks:**

Hello, members of the committee. My name is Dagim Gameda and I am the program manager of the Immigrant & Refugee employment service program at the non-profit agency Lifetrack Resources. Lifetrack works in collaboration with local non-profit agencies including: Hmong American Partnership, Vietnamese Social Service of Minnesota, Jewish Family Service, and Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association. The Lifetrack Resources collaborative consists of organizations with proven track records in helping refugees and immigrants achieve employment.

Since 1997, with funding from the Minnesota state legislature, we have offered unique services tailored to the needs of communities in Minnesota. Many of our clients are unable to use standard job search strategies such as the MN Workforce Center due to minimal language skills and computer skills. Our culturally appropriate multilingual employment services include:

- Orientation to work in the U.S.
- Job seeking and work-related skills
- Job development and placement
- English language training and work-related English classes
- Job retention follow-up
- Flexible services to meet the needs of employers and job seekers

Lifetrack Resources Immigrant & Refugee collaborative employment program has placed more than 2,100 refugees and immigrants with employment challenges. Over all average wages was \$9.10. The people we serve have English language barriers, educational limitations, and cultural barriers that get in the way of employment. They have a strong desire to work and obtain training. We offer them in individualized, culturally appropriate service and consistently have a waiting list of individuals to participate in our program because many of the people served by our program are not eligible for other employment service.

Helping refugees and immigrants integrate into the workforce provides immediate returns on investment: new workers reduce or terminate need for public assistance (MFIP), earn wages, pay taxes, and invest in their communities, both with purchasing power and through entrepreneurship. Immigrants provide new markets, new customers, revenue growth, and new jobs to our economy.

Our employment program plays an active role in community especially with local employers. Local employers express how convenient and cost effective it is to obtain pre-screened and trained employees. We make it a priority to not only provide post-placement support services for immigrant and refugee workers but for the employer as well.

Now, I would like to introduce two participants Ms. Mihnet Jasrevic and Mr. Rasulzhon Makhkamov who will tell you how the program helped them become successfully. Additionally I will introduce you to one of our employers Mr. Dave Smith president and CEO of Buddy's Kitchen who will tell you how the program helped his company. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

### **Mihnet Jasarevic, Client Testimony**

Hello, members of the committee. My name is Mihnet Jasarevic. I live in Rochester. Originally, I am from Bosnia. I moved to Rochester with my family three months ago from Michigan. In Michigan, both, my wife and I lost jobs due to the current economy situation.

We came to IMAA\* to look for help in finding employment. Our DEED job counselor made a contact with a few employers in town, prepared us for the interviews and helped with our resumes. Three weeks later both of us were working. My wife got a job at Samaritan Bethany and I was hired by Masterson Personnel. We are now able to provide food for our family and pay the rent and utilities.

I appreciate very much all the help I've got from IMAA. Whenever I get a chance I tell my family and friends about IMAA and this particular program, because there are so many refugees and immigrants like me who need this kind of help. I am happy to be here today and talk about IMAA and help I'm getting from them.

Thanks.

### **Rasulzhon Makkamov, Client Testimony**

A hello member of the committee, my name is Rasulzhon Makhkamov, and I live in Minneapolis. I am from the country of Tajikistan.

I arrived in the U.S. in August of 2008 and 2 months later I met with my employment counselor at Lifetrack Resources. My employment counselor helped me in my job search by fixing my resume and making references for me. My counselor tells me what companies are hiring and helps me apply for those jobs.

My employment counselor showed me how to use the computer to apply for jobs. Now I can look for jobs on my own at home. My employment counselor also emails me job leads with directions. We filled out applications together and called employers.

She also found language schools in Minneapolis so I can learn more English. She printed directions for me and gave me a bus card so I can get to school.

Now I work part time at Cub Foods and I like my job. I work in the deli department directly with customers and get to help people each day. I have benefits and hope to save some money to start my own business in the U.S. Together we did find a job.

I appreciate my employment counselor's professional consultation and advice in my process of job searching. All of the information she gives me is very helpful. I learned how to look for jobs, where I can go to school, and how to fill out the forms to prepare taxes.

My employment counselor at Lifetrack Resources taught me new things. As a new immigrant or refugee, this is the place where you get the support and help you need. I'm happy to be here today and talk to you in support of Lifetrack because they have done so much for me and my family.

Thank you.

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\* Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association is located in Rochester, MN and works in partnership with Lifetrack's Immigrant & Refugee employment program.