



“ One of the most moving distributions [of welcome packets] was organized in Milbridge. A caravan of local vehicles festooned with banners, welcoming seasonal workers and thanking them for their labor, paraded to local blueberry worker housing with music, food, packets, and posters of gratitude as people returned from work.

- Rural Maine Project Attorney, Barbara Taylor, Esq.

# Rural Maine Project

*Maine is a large, rural state, and ILAP believes everyone should have equal access to immigration legal services no matter where they live. Our Rural Maine Project combines direct and virtual outreach in all 16 counties so immigrant community members can understand their rights and get the legal help they need to thrive.*

As Maine's immigrant population increased, ILAP recognized that more people outside of the Portland and Lewiston metro areas required immigration legal services to meet their basic needs and advance towards economic security. From small cities like **Augusta, Bangor, and Biddeford and in rural areas with strong agricultural, fishery, and forestry sectors**, families were facing geographic and transportation barriers to accessing immigration legal services.

Many have work and caregiving responsibilities, so are unable to make the expensive and lengthy trip to ILAP's offices in Portland or Lewiston. Immigrants of color also face racial profiling while travelling.

Our Rural Maine Project helps meet these needs with **direct and virtual outreach to ensure all Mainers understand their civil and constitutional rights**. While the COVID-19 pandemic only deepened isolation and separation of these communities, we were able to pivot quickly to share information and maintain services. Our work with partners like the Maine Mobile Health Program and Mano en Mano allowed us to connect with

essential seasonal workers and distribute welcome packets with health, labor, and immigration resources in multiple languages.

Our ongoing virtual outreach allows us to forge relationships and maintain our reputation as a trusted partner in these communities. "Know Your Rights" presentations involve an overview of rights when interacting with immigration agents, police officers, and other law enforcement and has been given dozens of times across the state.

The pandemic spurred the Rural Maine Project's expansion of remote services as the project's work transitioned from on the road to online. Although these changes were necessitated by a moment of crisis, we have seen that they lower the barriers to accessing our services and benefit our organization in many ways. We'll be investing in improved technology and digital tools to allow our services to be more agile, responsive, wide-reaching, and effective.

