

AG Maura Healey's Advisory Council on New Americans Members



Elizabeth Sweet, Executive Director, Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition - Sweet brings to MIRA an 18-year record of advocating for immigrants and refugees. For the past six years, she served in senior leadership roles at HIAS (founded as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), most recently as its Chief Operating Officer.

A graduate of Northeastern University School of Law, Sweet set out to defend immigrants and asylum seekers in immigration detention during their deportation hearings. She later became the first full-time Director of the American Bar Association Immigration Justice Project in San Diego and then the Associate Director of the American Bar Commission on Immigration in Washington, DC.



Patricia Sobalvarro, Executive Director at Agencia ALPHA - As director of the agency Alcanzando Logros Para Los Hispanos Ahora (Achieving Successes For Hispanics Today), ALPHA, Patricia Sobalvarro is responsible for carrying out the social service mission of her organization, which was founded in 2001 by two Christian immigrant women. ALPHA offers educational programs, referrals, translation, etc., as well as advocacy and political impact programs in defense of immigrant rights.



Gladys Vega, Executive Director at La Colaborativa - Gladys Vega, Executive Director of La Colaborativa, joined the organization in 1990, two years after its inception as the Chelsea Human Services Collaborative. She took on increasing responsibility with each passing year, moving from receptionist to community organizer to Assistant Executive Director to becoming the Executive Director in 2006. Ms. Vega has worked as an organizer and an advocate to insure that the Latino community has a role in determining the ways its needs and concerns are addressed. Ms. Vega believes that empowerment of the individual leads to empowerment of the community and that social action is the vehicle an empowered community can use to achieve its goals. She has played leadership roles in organizing for immigrants' rights, welfare rights, tenants' rights, open space and the environment, multicultural and anti-racism programs and in numerous grassroots campaigns. She is not only a successful community organizer, but also one of Chelsea's most prominent and important community leaders, receiving citywide, statewide and national accolades for her leadership. Gladys Vega was born in Puerto Rico and came to Chelsea with her family at the age of nine. Since that time, Gladys has made a lifelong commitment to the community in which she was raised. Being a mother of two has deepened her commitment to building a better future.

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Natasha Soolkin, Director at New American Center, in Lynn - Natasha Soolkin came to the U.S. from Moscow, Russia in 1990. She has 15 years of experience working with the refugee population, organizing educational seminars for diverse refugee populations, interpreting and translating for refugee clients and mainstream organizations, and designing and implementing various activities for children and families. Since 2002, she has been a Regional Director of the RCAM North Shore Office and the manager of the New American Center. Her responsibilities include coordination of the Massachusetts Preventative Health Program, Refugee School Impact Program, Employment Support Service Program, Refugee Youth Adjustment Services, provision of family support services (Post-Resettlement Community Services, Program to Enhance Elder Refugee Services and Community Support Program), and translation and interpreting services.



Paulo Pinto, Executive Director, Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS) - Paulo R. Pinto is the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS). He has served the Portuguese-speaking community throughout his career of more than 25 years in the health and social service field. He began working at MAPS in January 1994, serving as Program Administrator for the agency's Disease Prevention and Education Program until late 1995, when he was promoted to the position of Deputy Executive Director. He served as the agency's second-in-command until April 3, 2000, when he became Acting Executive Director. He was appointed Executive Director by the MAPS Board of Directors on August 23, 2000. He is a member of the Governor's Council to Address Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, the Jane Doe Inc. Board of Directors, the Community Public Health Board and the Community Health Advisory Council of Cambridge Health Alliance, and the Harvard Catalyst Community Advisory Board. He also is a Notary Public for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



Karen Chen, Executive Director, Chinese Progressive Association - Chen immigrated to the U.S. at age 10, and first joined the CPA through its youth program. Her parents' experiences as low-wage workers in restaurant and garment industries inspired her social justice involvement and after college she became the worker rights organizer at CPA. In this role, she helped educate Chinese workers on their rights in the workplace and advocate on their behalf. Chen's previous roles also include work as a paralegal for the Asian outreach unit of Greater Boston Legal Services, and as tenant service coordinator for Castle Square Apartments, a 500-unit low-income housing complex at the edge of Chinatown and South End.

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Helena DaSilva Hughes, Chief Executive Officer at Immigrants' Assistance Center, Inc., in New Bedford – Helena DaSilva Hughes, was born in Madeira, Portugal, and immigrated to the United States at the age of 10 with her family. With a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a minor in Paralegal Studies from Newbury College, she is also a graduate of SouthCoast Leadership Academy in 2009. Ms. Hughes is committed to researching immigrant needs and developing programs to enhance the community potential. She has a working knowledge of community issues and legislative processes, serving as translator and interpreter. Ms. Hughes has been selected several times by the Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition, to inform and educate Congress about issues pertaining to the immigrant population. Ms. Hughes serves on the following Boards: Workforce Investment Board, the Governor's Advisory Council on Immigrants and Refugees, Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy, the New Bedford Advisory Board of the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), New Bedford Economic Development Council, Greater New Bedford Vocational High School Advisory Board, the Adult Learning Education Advisory, Portuguese American Citizenship Project Board of Directors, co-founder of Our Sister School, the Portuguese American Women's Association, Leadership SouthCoast, Inc., SouthCoast Hospital Community Benefits Advisory Board, the Offshore Wind Task Force and New Bedford Regeneration Committee.



Damaris Frias-Batista, Executive Director & co-founder of Center For Assistance to Families (CAF), Centro de Apoyo Familiar (CAF) - Damaris Frias-Batista co-founded CAF. She is Executive director of CAF's Lawrence, MA office and oversees The Connectors, a national capacity building program for clergy serving Latino churches that prepares them to serve as bridge between their congregations and their communities. Mrs. Frias-Batista brings over 15 years of experience in the area of leadership development, management, and program development. She holds a BA in Psychology from University of Massachusetts at Boston and a MA in Mental Health with specialty in children, youths and families from Southern New Hampshire University. Mrs. Frias Batista has served at her local church as youth, children, and family minister director.



Gladys Ortiz, Domestic Violence Advocate, at REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, in Waltham - Gladys Ortiz is originally from Colombia, and works with bilingual victims of domestic violence, bringing them to court appointments, providing translation, and access to service for victims.



Khalid Sadozai, Former President of the Islamic Society of Greater Worcester - Khalid Sadozai is the President of the Islamic Society of Greater Worcester. Founded and established in 1978, the ISGW has been focal point of Islamic activities for the Muslim community. The Islamic

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Society of Greater Worcester (ISGW), an independent non-profit organization that is located in central Massachusetts in the city of Worcester. The ISGW is dedicated to satisfying spiritual, education and social needs of the Muslims including New Muslims.



Suzanne Lee, Community Activist - Suzanne Lee is a Chinatown resident former principal of the Josiah Quincy Elementary School in Chinatown. During her decade long tenure as the school's principal, the school was named one of the Best 100 Elementary Schools in Massachusetts. She founded and then served as the longtime chair of the Chinese Progressive Association and is also a founding member of the Massachusetts Asian

American Educators Association. She has also served on the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Bilingual Education and the English Language Learners Task Force for the Boston Public Schools. She worked in the Boston Public School system for over three decades. She ran twice unsuccessfully for the District 2 seat – which includes Chinatown, Bay Village, Fort Point, South Boston and parts of downtown and the South End on the Boston City Council.



Ben Hires, Chief Executive Officer of Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center - Ben Hires joined BCNC as CEO in June 2020. Since his first job as a youth counselor at a therapeutic program, Ben has significant experience in nonprofit leadership and serving young people and families. He held leadership positions in programs, strategy, and external relations at the Boston Children's Chorus where he played a key role elevating the choir's social justice mission to bring diverse young people and their families together. As Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Boston Public Library, he established and maintained building strong relationships across education, cultural, and civic engagement sectors in order to advance the Library's mission of providing educational and cultural enrichment free to all Boston residents. Prior to being the CEO, Ben volunteered as a mentor for BCNC's College Access Program for youth and as a member of the Pao Arts Center Advisory Committee. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy and Political Science, a Master of Theological Studies, and a Master of Science in Arts Administration all from Boston University.



Ronnie Millar, Executive Director of Rian Immigrant Center - Millar is the Executive Director of the Rian Immigrant Center. Formerly known as the Irish International Immigrant Center, was founded in 1989 and has become Boston's Welcome Center for immigrant and refugee families from around the globe, providing immigration legal, resource & support services, education, and welcoming services. Ronnie emigrated to the United States in 1993 from Belfast, Northern Ireland. After working in technology for 20 years, he changed careers into human services in the year 2000. Ronnie is a graduate of UMass Boston's College of Public and Community Services. In addition to his work at the Rian Immigrant Center, Ronnie is also the Vice President of the

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National Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers, and serves on the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement.



Anh Vu Sawyer, Executive Director of the Southeast Asian Coalition - Anh Vu has developed new initiatives to assist immigrants and refugees such as the wellness and sewing program, and expanded the existing ESOL and Referral services. Besides focusing on program development, she has encouraged the development of arts and culture within the community.



Soben Pin, Co-founder-Manager of KhmerPost USA - Soben Pin was born in Vietnam's TraVinh Province during the years of turmoil that followed the fall of South Vietnam. With her own family disrupted by the consequences of the war, Soben along with her father, one sister, one brother came to the United States in 2000. After several years in California, the family moved to Philadelphia where Soben excelled in high school receiving a scholarship to and then graduating from Penn State. While in college, she embraced Khmer culture and became deeply involved in cultural and charitable causes in Philadelphia's large Cambodian community. It was there that she met and married Roger Pin. Together, they launched the KhmerPost USA of which Soben is the owner and business manager.



Rakashi Khetarpal Chand, Vice President, United India Association of New England - Rakashi Khetarpal Chand is the granddaughter of Hurbans Khetarpal, one of the first Indian Community Organizers and Activists in Boston. Rakashi is the current Vice President of the United India Association of New England, an organization founded by her grandfather and seven other like-minded Community Organizers in 1986, to promote Indian culture and assist Indian families and new immigrants residing in New England. Rakashi has served on the board of the United India Association of New England for 6 years, although she has been actively promoting Indian Culture and organizing Community Events through most of her life. Aside from organizing Community Events, Rakashi works at the Massachusetts Historical Society.



Mojdeh Rohani, Executive Director, De Novo (Community Legal Services and Counseling Center) - Mojdeh Rohani is the Executive Director at De Novo (formerly known as Community Legal Services and Counseling Center, in Cambridge. Previously, she served as CLSACC's Associate Clinical Director for eight years. Mojdeh has worked extensively with survivors of torture, war trauma, gender-based violence, human trafficking, and other types of human rights violations since 2000. She received her MSW from Boston University and earned a B.A. in Psychology through the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education in Iran. She co-

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authored a book in 2004 on social work theory and practice with refugee and immigrant youth in the United States. Mojdeh has been Adjunct Faculty at Boston University School of Social Work and most recently served as the Co-Director of the BRIDGE (Building Refugee and Immigrant Degrees for Graduate Education) Program for 8 years. Prior to coming to the United States in 1995, she worked as a music therapist and a music teacher.



Brooke Mead, Former Executive Director, Berkshire Immigrant Center

- Brooke Mead is the Former Executive Director at the Berkshire Immigrant Center (BIC) in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, winner of Massachusetts Non-Profit Network’s “Excellence by a Small Non-Profit” Award in 2018. BIC offers comprehensive services for around 700 individuals annually from more than 70 countries to promote civic engagement, facilitate cultural integration, and assist clients with immigration law.

Additionally, BIC engages and educates 300-500 community members through outreach workshops and presentations. Brooke began her career at the Center in September of 2002 working for many years as its Program Manager. In addition to directorial work, Brooke manages a caseload of clients and provides workshops on immigration law. A Williamstown, MA native, she credits various time spent living abroad with her passion to help those who have come to reside in the U.S. temporarily or permanently. Before joining BIC Brooke taught Spanish. She holds her master’s degree in Spanish from Middlebury College and has lived in Venezuela and Mexico.



Grace Corporan, Site Director for Families and Youth Initiative/ PATCH

- Grace Corporan is the site director of the Families and Youth Initiative/ PATCH, a non-profit family centered service agency in Lawrence. PATCH/ FYI mission is to combine and integrate community; agencies and family resources; to promote policy change to support creative nurturing services for strengthening families and communities in Lawrence and other cities in the Merrimack Valley. Under her leadership as a site director, she has coordinated various seminars to encourage parents to enroll students in after school programs; for undocumented residents in Lawrence to understand their rights and other topics related to landlord and tenant rights. She has served as a board member for Casa Dominicana. Ms. Corporan is also a native from the Dominican Republic and has lived in Puerto Rico. As an immigrant herself, she brings her cultural experience, expertise as a community organizer and as a service provider to understand the needs of the immigrant community in Lawrence.

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Liliana Patino, Director at Elliot Family Resource Center, in Everett - Mrs. Liliana Patino is originally from Colombia, and has served as the Director of the Eliot Family Resource Center since it opened in 2017. The Massachusetts Family Resource Centers (FRC), funded by the Department of Children and Families, are a statewide network of community-based providers, offering multi-cultural parenting programs, support groups, early childhood services, information and referral resources in the community, and education for families with children from birth to 18 years of age. After completing her Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling with a concentration in marriage and family at Cambridge College, she joined Eliot Community Human Services as an outpatient therapist. Shortly thereafter she was promoted to Clinical Supervisor, serving one of the Everett Public Schools, and after that promoted to Director at the Family Resource Center.



Arthur Almeda, Executive Director at Boston Missionary Baptist Community Center (BMBCC), Inc., in Boston. The organization promotes change across minority communities in the areas of education, healthcare, and advocacy. A native of Haiti, Mr. Almeda has led the organization for 12 years overseeing programs that teach language and work skills to youth and adults, provide food at sites throughout Greater Boston, and help newcomers meet needs for housing, jobs, health care and behavioral health, and immigration.