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IMMIGRANTS' DAY AT THE STATE HOUSE 2017
Eva Millona – prepared remarks

BOSTON, April 5, 2017 – Thank you, Rep. Matias for your introduction and for serving as emcee here at the 21st annual Immigrants' Day at the State House, the largest legislative event advancing the rights and integration of immigrant and refugee families in all of New England. We are proud to have a former Justice Americorps attorney and the first Latina elected to the Mass. House of Representatives not only as a part of this program, but as an ally in the fight.

Like the 20 years that came before it, this Immigrants' Day is an opportunity for people from across our Commonwealth to come to their State House to share their thoughts, concerns and hopes with their legislators. In that respect, this year is no different, and I hope that you know that your voice IS important, and that it is imperative that you share it.

However, in many others ways, this year IS different. After a grueling presidential campaign that left many anxious about the future, our current federal administration has made it clear through executive orders and subsequent draconian policies targeting our family, friends, and fellow resident of Massachusetts that they did, in fact, plan to make good on their promises to divide and separate our country.

As someone who has lived through threatening times in my own country of birth, I recognize the fear that has become pervasive in our community. I have heard the stories of young children terrified that their parent won't be there when they return from school; have stood next to esteemed friends from our own colleges and universities as they told of foreign students and professors barred from entering our country. I have watched my staff as, day in and day out, they strive to respond to the overwhelming need for training and educate on basic civil rights. These were not things I expected to see in the country I chose for its love of justice and pursuit of equality under the law.

But in these challenging times I have also felt the pride that comes from being in a state that does not back down. We have seen our Attorney General take the president to court. We have heard our Governor affirm our state's welcome to refugees, oppose the Muslim ban and express his concern about actions which imperil our workforce. We have joined our lawyers, elected officials and countless friends at Logan and on the Common in defense of our Constitution, our values and our families. These moments, your strength, give me hope. They get me up in the morning and keep me believing that even if the door for immigration reform has shut at the national level, in Massachusetts we are opening a window.

Our state has always led in dark times. From serving as the hub of the anti-slavery movement to blazing a trail for marriage equality, in Massachusetts we lead, and leadership is what is called for right now. We need to take a stand and say no bully has the right to strip our residents of due process or to co-opt our police for its own ill-begotten purposes. Massachusetts

is great because it is a place where people from around the world, from Ireland, to Italy, from El Salvador to Somalia have found an education, a home and an ability to make a future that makes ALL of our lives richer.

Nationally, over 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children. Here in Massachusetts, it's almost 60 percent. These Bay State companies generate almost a billion and a half dollars in revenue every year and provide jobs for nearly half a million people around the world.

Here are some more numbers. Over one million Bay State residents – or about 1 in 6 of us – was born outside of this country. Together, we have 27 billion dollars in spending power each year and contribute 4 and a half billion dollars to Social Security and Medicare each year. One in five workers and one in five business owners in our state is an immigrant or a refugee. These 66,000 foreign-born entrepreneurs generate nearly 2 billion dollars in Massachusetts every year. Even our undocumented population paid more than \$197 million in state and local taxes in recent years.

Immigration is a multi-generational phenomenon: more than a quarter of all children in Massachusetts have at least one immigrant parent. These children are growing up knowing that there is much to be valued and learned within and outside our national borders. They understand the importance of education, of hard work, of service. They see their parents' sacrifices and struggles, and strive to excel. Their well-being, and our collective well-being, benefits from strong policies and robust funding for programs that support economic, civic, and social integration of immigrants and refugees.

Now is the moment for action. We do not have time to sit on our hands and wonder what might happen to our country: We know. That is why we must call on our legislators to stand firm against the threats and grandstanding by Washington. We are the common wealth of Massachusetts, the more than one million of us immigrants, and we have a voice.

This year MIRA turns 30, and I have to say we have never felt more needed than we are right now. From bringing more than 1,500 people through the citizenship process, advocating for unaccompanied minors in court, registering more than 10,000 New Americans to vote, supporting our more than 130 member organizations, and advancing pro-immigrant legislation to protect our families and provide them opportunities, MIRA has had the privilege of serving you to the best of our ability. And we hope to continue to do so for many years to come.

But without further ado, it is my pleasure to introduce a long-time friend and supporter of the immigrant community, Senate President Stan Rosenberg. The Senate President has stood with MIRA and the immigrant and refugee community from his first years as a representative from Western Mass and has led the battle to defend the rights of under-represented people throughout his career. We are honored to call him a friend and even more grateful that he has come today to share his support for ALL Massachusetts residents.