<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>We Are Mira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>To Our Supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mira Coalition Highlights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>» Celebrating Eleven Years of NAIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>» FY22 Citizenship Department Highlights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>» FY22 State Policy Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Communications/Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Staff Features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>» Director of Welcome New Hampshire, Eva Castillo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>» Chief of Staff, Sarang Sekhavat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Impact By The Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Sources of Revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Mira’s Generous Donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Staff List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear MIRA supporters,

We are thrilled to share MIRA Coalition's 2022 Annual Report with you. 2022 was a year of exciting progress for MIRA and for advocacy for and with immigrant communities across Massachusetts. As Massachusetts saw a change in the rate of new immigrant arrivals coming to our Commonwealth, MIRA Coalition and our partners responded. We advocated for funding and coordination of the response to our newest neighbors, funneling millions in state funds to organizations on the ground, and spoke up regularly in the media to provide reliable information. We also saw one of the movement’s biggest victories in decades with the passage of the Work and Family Mobility Act that allows immigrants of all statuses a driver’s license. The veto-proof vote on Beacon Hill, the success of the Yes on 4 campaign, and the warm reception that new arrivals have received across the state have demonstrated to our political leaders that Massachusetts is a welcoming state for immigrants and refugees. MIRA built on this momentum with many other important advances, that you will read about in the following pages.

And internally, MIRA Coalition focused on strengthening our approach to our work even as this landscape changes. We launched a strategic planning process which began with a review of our mission and vision statements, and drafting of our first set of organizational values. We are grateful to lift up the values of being immigrant and refugee centered, the value of inclusion, collaboration, and capacity building.

Thank you to all of our coalition and government partners, members and donors, who make possible this critical work for immigrant communities.

Liz Sweet
Executive Director
Estimados miembros y aliados de la Coalición MIRA,

En MIRA Coalition estamos encantados de compartir con ustedes nuestro Informe Anual 2022. El año 2022 fue un tiempo de progreso emocionante para MIRA y para la defensa de las comunidades de inmigrantes en todo Massachusetts. En coordinación con nuestros socios, MIRA Coalition respondió cuando nuestra Commonwealth registró un ascenso en la llegada de nuevos inmigrantes. Abogamos por el financiamiento y la coordinación institucional para responder y recibir a nuestros nuevos vecinos; canalizamos millones en fondos estatales para las organizaciones que trabajan en nuestro sector y participamos regularmente en los medios de comunicación para proporcionar información confiable. También presenciamos una de las mayores victorias del movimiento en décadas con la aprobación de la Ley de Movilidad Laboral y Familiar que permite a los inmigrantes, independientemente de su estatus, obtener una licencia de conducir. Adicionalmente, la votación a prueba de veto en Beacon Hill, el éxito de la Campaña Sí a las 4 por Carreteras más Seguras y, la cálida recepción que han recibido los recién llegados en todo el estado, son hechos que demostraron a nuestros líderes políticos que Massachusetts es un estado acogedor para inmigrantes y refugiados. MIRA Coalition aprovechó este impulso, el cual junto con otros avances importantes, usted podrá leer con mayor detalle en las siguientes páginas.

Internamente, MIRA Coalition enfocó y reorganizó su trabajo para actuar en un contexto en permanente cambio. Para ello, realizamos un proceso de planificación estratégica en el cual revisamos nuestra Misión y Visión, y redactamos un primer ideario de valores organizacionales. Estamos agradecidos de proyectar esos valores y ponerlos al servicio de los inmigrantes y refugiados, enfatizando el valor de la inclusión, la colaboración y el desarrollo de capacidades.

Gracias a todos nuestros socios, miembros y donantes de coalición y gobierno, que hacen posible este trabajo fundamental para las comunidades de inmigrantes.

Liz Sweet
Directora Ejecutiva
The United States of America holds the distinction of having the largest foreign-born population in the world—about 45 million people as of 2021 or almost 14% of the country’s population were born in other countries. The immigrant population strengthens our economy with their human capital potential and contributes significant assets to the cultural and social life of our nation. However, integrating into a new country can be very challenging for many immigrants. Low and moderate income immigrants face some of the most difficult obstacles for economic mobility and social inclusion, including limited English proficiency, barriers to entering US labor markets, and access to citizenship services. MIRA believes that refugees and immigrants are among the Commonwealth’s greatest assets and have a right to thrive and be a part of our communities, without barriers to their success. This year, MIRA celebrates 11 years of our New American Integration Program (NAIP) aimed to support immigrant and refugee integration by training and placing AmeriCorps members to provide English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction, job readiness training, citizenship services, and supporting access to other community resources. The expansion of these services helps immigrants and refugees achieve economic stability, resulting in greater social, civic and economic cohesion that is mutually beneficial to both newcomers and the receiving society. In exchange, NAIP members also receive a modest living allowance, professional development, health + childcare benefits, and an educational award upon completion of service.

Since its inception in 2011, NAIP has been funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service/AmeriCorps and has placed 238 members at 54 host sites across Massachusetts, and provided services to 23,597 immigrant and refugee clients. The program was initiated as a partnership of the Massachusetts Office for Refugees (ORI) and Immigrants, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), and ENB in 2015, MIRA assumed full program and fiscal oversight of NAIP.

In the 2021-2022 service year, NAIP placed 19 Members in 16 host sites. NAIP’s service area reflects the geographical distribution of the foreign-born population in Massachusetts, which as of 2021, totaled approximately 1.2 million, or 17.4% of the state’s population (MIRA, 2021). Immigrants and refugees in Massachusetts reside largely in and near the urban areas and gateway cities, with the greatest concentrations in Eastern Massachusetts—especially Greater Boston, Southeastern Massachusetts, the Merrimack Valley, and Worcester. NAIP host sites serve most of these areas.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without our incredible Americorps members, our strong partnerships with organizations throughout the Commonwealth and our amazing and dedicated NAIP department at MIRA who kept it all afloat. We are especially proud that our NAIP alum continue to thrive and make an impact in the community.

NAIP alum Hannah Avila served in 2019 and continues to support and advocate for immigrants and refugees in the Commonwealth. “I am grateful to NAIP for introducing me to and propelling me into the amazing community of organizations, providers, and individuals supporting immigrants across Massachusetts. In my NAIP role, I helped teach a beginner-level English class and served as a case manager supporting families accessing childcare vouchers. After AmeriCorps I applied for and accepted a full time job at my host site. That work led me into what I’m doing today for the City of Boston Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement, focusing on improving Boston residents’ access to immigration legal services. Thank you to NAIP for the experience that brought me here!”

We also want to give special recognition to MIRA’s former Senior Director of Programs, Christine Ntagengwa, for leading and aligning our NAIP program and selflessly dedicating her career to helping uprooted people feel safe, valued and secure in Massachusetts and beyond. Cheers to many more years of NAIP!
Opening the official website of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services office, looking at the imposing blue, white and red shield of Homeland Security, can be an intimidating experience for any non-citizen. That is even more true for an immigrant looking for information to begin that long, winding, and complicated process that involves obtaining American citizenship.

This government website has detailed information to explain each of the procedures that are necessary to obtain citizenship, including educational videos that help understand each procedure. However, language barriers, the cost of the application and legal services, the legal technicalities of language, the fear of making mistakes when filling out official forms, are just some of the obstacles that immigrants must face.

For more than a decade, MIRA Coalition has responded to these obstacles by offering high quality free legal services and trying to meet would-be citizens in their own communities. “We appreciate everything that the MIRA team did for us. We needed support for each step of the paperwork and understanding of the process. You were always there answering questions, especially emails promptly. Thank you” (MIRA Client from Morocco).

How did the MIRA Coalition help migrants and refugees at each of the crucial stages of the process during 2022?

First Step: We spoke with hundreds of immigrants interested in learning about the path to citizenship and conducted an in-depth screening with 319 individuals. During these screenings we collect information to determine whether they meet the basic requirements for citizenship, such as confirming whether they have been legal permanent residents for five years; whether they’ve had any significant problems with the law that could be a barrier; and whether they speak, read and write in English or qualify for an exception or medical waiver, among other requirements.

Second Step: The Citizenship Team supported 207 clients in the key moments of the process to apply for citizenship and correctly fill out the forms from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services office and secure fee waivers for eligible clients. Applicants were also provided with resources to help them prepare for the interview and know what to expect, including an annotated guide to the civics questions and answers. Many of the applicants were also referred to partner organizations for citizenship preparation classes and additional support. In addition, MIRA helped 19 people, who had automatically become US citizens through their parent’s naturalization, apply for certificates of citizenship.

Another service offered by the MIRA Coalition Citizenship Team is to provide free legal assistance to people in Massachusetts who need to renew their Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) permits. To assist them in a timely manner, DACA clients should submit their renewal application to MIRA between 120 and 150 days before their current permit expires.

In the period covered by this Annual Report, the MIRA Coalition Citizenship Team helped 23 people renew their DACA status, and provided financial assistance to at least 10 applicants to cover the $495 filing fee.

MIRA Coalition will continue to help DACA holders, while continuing to call for comprehensive immigration reform including a path to citizenship for Dreamers and beyond, “Dreamers do not deserve to live every day worrying about their status. Dreamers fuel America’s economy and enrich its culture, and it is time to ensure they can pursue their dreams without fear of deportation from the only place they’ve called home.”

~ Elizabeth Sweet
MIRA’s Executive Director
Pathways to Practice for Immigrant Medical Professionals

From September 2021 to July 2022, the MIRA Coalition served on the Governor’s Special Commission on Foreign-Trained Medical Professionals, charged with developing recommendations to eliminate licensing and other barriers to practice faced by highly skilled immigrant and refugee medical professionals in Massachusetts. Chaired by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Commission’s appointees also included designees of the Governor and state legislature, representatives of the Boards of Registration of major health professions, including the Board of Registration in Medicine, Dentistry, and Nursing, the MIRA Coalition, the Massachusetts Medical Society, the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association, the Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals, UMass Chan Medical School, the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, and many others. The Special Commission’s final report, issued July 1, 2022, laid the groundwork for the introduction of the Physician Pathway Act in 2023, which would address acute physician shortages in rural and under-served communities by mobilizing the expertise of experienced internationally-trained physicians.

Increasing Voting Power of Immigrants and People of Color - Redistricting 2022

In the summer and fall of 2021, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition joined more than 60 advocacy organizations in the statewide Drawing Democracy Coalition. MIRA and the coalition advocated to ensure that the Commonwealth’s once-a-decade redistricting process took place in an equitable manner that empowered traditionally-underserved communities, including BIPOC, immigrant, and low-income voters.

MIRA played a pivotal role in organizing community groups and individuals to submit testimony and engage with legislators on the importance of making redistricting as equitable and representative as possible. MIRA played an especially large role in leading the coalition’s communications efforts, helping create and drive the coalition’s communications strategy, creating messaging which highlighted the importance of the redistricting process and its impact on representation, pitching reporters throughout the state, and coordinating op-ed and Letter to the Editor placement in news outlets throughout the state.

MIRA and the coalition’s efforts proved successful. The tone of coverage and focus on the impact for previously under-served communities was a significant part of the debate throughout the redistricting process. In the end, the state’s majority-BIPOC House districts grew from 20 to 33, and the majority-BIPOC Senate districts doubled from three to six in 2022. In cities such as Framingham, Lawrence, and Brockton, BIPOC, immigrant, and low-income voters secured electoral districts that more accurately reflected the needs and interests of their communities.

MIRA was proud to serve as a leading partner for the Drawing Democracy Coalition and is ready to be so during the next redistricting cycle.

OTHER STATE LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES

Drivers Licenses for All!

June 2022 saw the historic passage of the Work and Family Mobility Act, culminating a 20-year struggle by MIRA and other advocates to extend driver’s license eligibility to all qualified state residents, regardless of their immigration status. The Driving Families Forward Coalition’s vigorous campaign steered the bill to a decisive victory, overcoming a gubernatorial veto, and successfully defended the bill from a ballot recall effort in November. MIRA is proud of our advance work on REAL ID implementation, which secured the survival of the Massachusetts Standard License as the vehicle for expanded licensure.

MIRA’s Legislative team poses with our amazing volunteers who assist new U.S. citizens with the voter registration process. Pictured here at Faneuil Hall in Boston, Massachusetts.
The Communications team collaborated with the Citizenship department to create, ‘The Citizenship Podcast.’ These short YouTube videos explained the process, eligibility and benefits to applying for American Citizenship. All episodes can be streamed on MIRA’s YouTube channel.

In October of 2022, MIRA’s former Political Director, Sarang Sekhavat, joined WGBH’s ‘Basic Black’ host Calle Crossley and guests to discuss how leaders are using human lives as political pawns in anti-immigration schemes. Sarang explained how the political stunt was intentionally cruel and dehumanizing. The full episode can be streamed on YouTube.

The MIRA Coalition was featured in various local & national media outlets throughout FY22.

We saw how effectively the Baker administration mobilized to secure emergency shelter and state services for the Venezuelan migrants, as well as the critical role that was played by legal service providers and community organizations on the ground,” MIRA Legislative Affairs Director Amy Grunder said. “But the needs of other migrants deserve the same response, as do the community organizations that are really heroically struggling to provide for them with private funds.

Published on Mass LIVE - Oct. 06, 2022

In this article, MIRA’s Legislative team urges the Baker administration to also secure emergency shelter and state services for the many refugees & asylum seekers coming from Haiti, Brazil, Central America, Afghanistan, and Ukraine. Not just for the migrants who landed on Martha’s Vineyard.

In this article, our Executive Director Liz Sweet shares the striking differences on how the U.S. government reacts when refugee crises emerge elsewhere, particularly in non-white, non-Christian and non-European countries.

In this article, MIRA Coalition members and community organizations explain why we must always recognize the contributions that immigrants have made to American society and the urgent need to decrease barriers in the naturalization process in honor of Constitution Day.
Social Media
GROWTH

13K
FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

6.4K
TWITTER FOLLOWERS

2.8K
INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

11.4K
BULLETIN SUBSCRIBERS

STAFF FEATURES
Eva Castillo is a living legend in the New Hampshire immigrant organizing scene. She has been directing welcoming, training, and advocacy efforts at MIRA’s sister organization, New Hampshire Alliance of Immigrants and Refugees (NHAIR) for almost 20 years (and in a personal capacity for much longer).

As the only dedicated immigrant rights activist in the state, she has seen the change and has been changed by the movement. As an example, as Police Commissioner, she has gone to great lengths to learn police culture and present cultural diversity training to law enforcement, so they can recognize how differently they might be viewed by immigrants. “Back home in Venezuela and in other countries, cops are the strong arm of totalitarian governments - we don’t trust them- and that can affect the outcome of a routine encounter”

Changing the culture of an organization isn’t easy, but pretty soon she was leading cultural diversity and anti-racism training across the state. Now, when she gets requests for help from the community, she knows who to call to get answers and assistance.

Building relationships with unlikely allies has made a difference. As a result:

- Police Chiefs and Sheriffs helped defeat anti-sanctuary bills in the state legislature, arguing that the measure would erode trust in local communities that they worked so hard to build.
- Meetings with DMV Executives over 20 years has resulted in a multilingual website, hiring of a diverse staff to serve the community, and greater discussion around Driver’s Licenses for all, a policy most NH State Legislators are not yet on board with.
- The Secretary of State drafted a letter welcoming newly naturalized citizens, letting them know how to register to vote and urging them to do so.

Eva says she is willing to work with anyone, even those with whom she doesn’t see eye to eye. “Do not make those people [cops] your enemy. I find commonality, like our love of our city, and I build on it. We need the people that have power “on our side” to make the changes that we need.”

Progress can be slow, but Eva argues that by having a seat at the table, she is able to bring issues to people of power who do not always hear the beat on the street. “It is a part of recognizing our strengths and privilege,” she says, “something I do everyday. Build relationships, stick to the issues and don’t make it personal, that’s my message to the next generation of activists.”
SARANG SEKHAVAT
A MIRA Staff Member with Migrant Roots

The MIRA Coalition staff is an expression of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Massachusetts. That diversity is a way for the MIRA Coalition team to be highly empathetic to the challenges that migrant families in our Commonwealth must face. Sarang Sekhavat, our current Chief of Staff, was born in the United States to Iranian parents. Since 2008, he has been a consistent collaborator in each and every MIRA Coalition struggle.

Sarang, a common name in the day-to-day life of MIRA, has held responsibility in various aspects of the organization and is an experienced spokesperson before the media. In his own words, Mr. Sekhavat summarizes what his family’s origins are in the US, the meanings of his first and last name, his relationship with the MIRA Coalition, and his personal motivations for collaborating here.

Tell us about your family’s story and where your name comes from.

“My family came from Iran in 1971, when my older brother was only 3 months old. They only intended to stay for a few years while my father pursued his career. My birth and then the revolution delayed their return enough that they finally got their green cards in the late seventies. Still, they always intended to return, so it wasn’t until the late 90s that they obtained their US citizenship. I’m proud that my last name means ‘generous’, but there’s some debate about my first name. I’ve heard a few different things that it could mean, including “song bird”, “love bird”, and also some type of ceremonial alcoholic drink from pre-Islamic days. It’s not a common name at all, and the last time I was in Iran, I had someone ask me where the name comes from.

“For me, it’s always felt as if I’ve straddled two worlds, never quite fully belonging in either one. It’s a serious challenge when you’re dealing with two countries that developed such animosity to each other while I was young, but as I grew up, I learned to appreciate the good things about each country and each culture.

Why have you continued to work at MIRA Coalition, for immigrant rights?

“Immigrants have been contributing to the state since before it was a state, since the Mayflower first landed here. We practically deify the first immigrants to this state, why do we demonize those who come new?”

“My journey at MIRA has been one of incredible growth and learning. Most important though is that my journey at MIRA has allowed me to meet and work with some truly incredible people not only here in the Baystate, but all around the country."

“10 years ago, we did a bus tour around New England in support of comprehensive immigration reform. To spend three or four days with such passionate people whose lives are impacted everyday by their lack of status was truly inspiring. At each stop, we were greeted by huge crowds of allies, many of whom also lacked status, but others were not directly impacted and came out to show their support. I still talk to some of the people who were on that bus tour with us even a decade later.”
MIRA'S IMPACT
BY THE NUMBERS FY22

$28+ Million
Secured in the State Budget for Immigrants & Refugees in Massachusetts including:
• $8M for MIRA member Immigrant Family Services Institute (IFSI) to resettle Haitian asylum seekers.
• $20M to meet the needs all newly-arrived immigrants and refugees.
• $500,000 to build the RMV’s language access capacity in anticipation of expanded eligibility for drivers licenses.

$162 K
Unafraid Scholarships (to help Undocumented students realize their educational dreams)

2689
Immigrants & Refugees served by NAIP Americorps Members (including job placements, English language instruction and citizenship forms submitted)

252
of Naturalized Citizens in Massachusetts

177
of New Voters registered in Massachusetts

70 +
Media Mentions in FY22 (And many more mentions of MIRA member organizations and immigrant voices)

1000 +
Participants in various MIRA trainings & workshops including:
• Intro to Immigration Series: virtual sessions to share relevant, up-to-date, and accurate information on basic immigration topics
• 40-hour Immigration Law Training: for staff at nonprofits interested in obtaining Dept. of Justice recognition and accreditation.
• Private Workshops & Training Sessions: on Immigration-related issues for organizations across Massachusetts
• Democracy School: capacity-building workshops for community leaders and advocates of all ages and backgrounds.
MIRA’s mission of advancing the rights and inclusion of immigrants has been supported by hundreds of generous funders - foundation, government, corporate, and individual supporters.

Our revenue sources provide a strong and balanced foundation for our work. We are committed to accountability and to thoughtful use of our resources.

Every donation increases our capacity to meet the urgent needs of immigrants and refugees. We deeply appreciate the generosity and caring of our partners in this critical work!
OUR GENEROUS DONORS

Thank you so much to all of MIRA’s supporters that help make our work possible!

$100,000 +

• Anonymous (2)
• Barr Foundation
• City of Boston
• Endowment for Health

• Massachusetts Service Alliance
• National Immigration Law Center
• The Klarman Family Foundation

$50,000 - $99,999

• Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Massachusetts
• Commonwealth of Massachusetts

• Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation
• Herman & Frieda Miller Foundation
• Hyams Foundation

$20,000 - $49,999

• Anonymous
• Center for Community Change
• Common Stream
• Digital Federal Credit Union
• Frank W. and Carl S. Adams Memorial Fund
• Merrill Family Charitable Foundation
• Nellie Mae Education Foundation
• New Hampshire Charitable Foundation

• New Hampshire Progress Alliance
• NIKE, Inc., Social & Community Impact
• Richard Grudzinski and Julie Bowden
• Shipley Foundation, Inc.
• The Boston Foundation

$10,000 - $19,999

• Abigail Vogt and Bonnie-May Shantz
• Action for Boston Community Development Inc.
• Afarin and Mahmoud Ketabi
• Aixa Beauchamp and Thomas Melendez
• American Immigration Lawyers Association of New England
• Andrea Humez and Jan-Mullen Maessen
• Anonymous (5)
• Beals and Thomas, Inc.
• Betsy Nicoletti
• BlueHub Capital
• Bonnie Orlin
• Boston Plastic & Oral Surgery Foundation
• Boston Public Health Commission
• Brian Rogan and Adriane Musgrave
• Carolyn and Michael Crowley
• Christopher Gaebler
• Christopher Wilfong and Ashley Bleimes
• Cliford Romash and Deborah Oppenheimer
• Dale and Carol DeLetis
• David Rice
• Donna Lazorik and Gail Zacharias
• DoorDash, Inc.

• Ron Kermisch and Alison Brigham
• United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley
• Wilhelmina Bandler and Jeremiah Huson

$1,000 - $9,999

• Abigael Vogt and Bonnie-May Shantz
• Action for Boston Community Development Inc.
• Afarin and Mahmoud Ketabi
• Aixa Beauchamp and Thomas Melendez
• American Immigration Lawyers Association of New England
• Andrea Humez and Jan-Mullen Maessen
• Anonymous (5)
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• Christopher Wilfong and Ashley Bleimes
• Cliford Romash and Deborah Oppenheimer
• Dale and Carol DeLetis
• David Rice
• Donna Lazorik and Gail Zacharias
• DoorDash, Inc.

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• Dr. Cheryl McSweeney
• Dr. Elizabeth Kass
• Dr. Henrietta Barnes and David Bor
• Dr. Jerry Avorn and Karen Tucker
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• Isabella Newell
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• Jeffrey Berry
• Jerry Rubin
• Joan and Ed Shankle
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$1,000 - $9,999

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- Mass General Brigham
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- Menemsha Family Fund
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- Michelle Limaj
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- Molly Carey
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- Point32Health Foundation
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- Reiner and Nancy Beeukees
- Robert and Patricia Rivers
- Roxane Vik
- Scott and Janice FitzGerald
- Silicon Valley Bank - New England
- Strauss and Roy Charitable Fund
- Susan and Westy Egmont
- Susan Beck
- Tayeb Karim
- Terri-Lynn McCormick
- The Garth Family Foundation
- The HYM Investment Group LLC
- The New World Foundation
- The Svirsky Family Fund
- Town Fair Tire Foundation
- Unite Here Local 26
- Verizon Foundation
- Western Union
- Willa and Edwin Kuh

$200 - $999

- AbbiVie
- Adam Blumer and Sarah Guernsey
- Alison Goldberg
- Allan Rodgers
- Alma McDonald
- Amanda Brown
- Angen Foundation
- Andrew Rainer
- Anne Mulvey
- Anne W. Ellsworth
- Anonymous (6)
- Anonymous (9)
- Another Cafe Fiorella
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- Arpit Patel
- Aylette Jenness
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- Brinton Lykes
- Bronwen White
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- Carol and Daniel Singer Bricklin
- Carol and Frank Caro
- Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco
- Caroline Souza
- Catherine Lee
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- Celia Gilbert
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- Jane Carey
- Janet King
- Janice Kranz
- Jeanne Hobbie
- Jennifer Dick
- Jeri Bayer
- Jessica and William Madden-Fuoco
- Jill Goldenberg
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In addition to the generous friends listed here, we thank all our donors of any amount in FY22, our anonymous donors, and those who supported scholarships through Boston Unafraid, Lawrence Unafraid, and Somerville Dreamers. Your generosity created a caring welcome for thousands of immigrants and refugees!
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People and Administration Specialist

2022 Annual Report | Staff List | 32

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2022 Annual Report | Board of Directors | 33