Dear friend,

I hope you and your loved ones are well.

At the time of print, Russia is waging war in Ukraine, and the humanitarian, refugee crises in Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Haiti, Central America and elsewhere weigh heavy. The pandemic has resulted in deep loss and pain for so many – and disproportionately on marginalized immigrant families. It’s a dark picture. In this context, we share a summary of the work of our immigration legal, education, resource and support services, advocacy, and international learning exchange teams. Our hearts are full of gratitude for your support - our donors, foundations, government and community partners. Thank you for standing in solidarity with our immigrant neighbors. We are grateful for our longstanding partnerships with Rosie's Place and the Boston Medical Center, and for being able to assist more immigrant patients at Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Boston Healthcare for the Homeless (with Health Law Advocates), and assisting more K-12 immigrant students in Boston, Cambridge, Somerville (with Enroot), Revere, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, and Winthrop.

Rian continues our lead role and fiscal sponsorship in the Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative which has provided emergency cash, food and vaccine equity assistance to more than 90,000 immigrants through the pandemic. We are launching a new shared services initiative with the support of the Klarman Family Foundation and Fish Family Foundation. When the Biden administration announced Temporary Protected Status re-designation for Haiti, our legal team responded by assisting 500 Haitian immigrants complete their TPS and others applications. Our attorneys also assisted Afghans on family reunification, and obtaining work permits.

With the support of the Arbella Insurance Foundation, we assisted more immigrants with job applications, resumes, and citizenship applications. Our social workers assisted 350 immigrants with therapeutic counseling, outreach and resource referrals, providing stability and hope during stressful times. Behind every number is a story of courage and resilience. We are truly inspired and grateful to walk alongside so many on their path to new beginnings.

Rian is deeply committed to racial equity. We listen to, learn from, and amplify oppressed voices. We are dedicated to creating an organizational culture and Center where all are welcomed. As we look forward to fully reopening our Center soon, and planning the transition to a new executive director, I want you to know that I am forever grateful for your partnership, support, and friendship. Thank you! Together, we have helped establish Rian as Boston’s Welcome Center for immigrant families. We have welcomed and assisted immigrants from over 120 countries and sought to secure equitable opportunities and protections for all.

Onwards in hope, gratitude and solidarity.
Rian Staff and Boards

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Jacqueline Baker, Immigration Attorney
Sarah Bayer, Director of Resources and Support Services
Ann Marie Byrne, Irish Outreach Coordinator & Recruitment Manager
Raphaela Barros Campbell, Director of Foundation Relations
Gjergji Cani, Director of Finance, retiring March 2022
Ellie Carver, Director of Learning Exchange Programs
Erin Chubb, ESOL Instructor
Jude Clarke, Senior LEP Manager | Ireland
Cristina Dacchille Freeman, Senior Immigration Attorney
Victoria DiCianni, Social Worker
Ilona Drew, Director of People and Partnerships
Jonah Hahn, Paralegal
Rebecca Hale, Director of Education Services
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Mission

The Rian Immigrant Center empowers immigrant and refugee families on the path to opportunity, safety, and a better future for all.

We are working towards a society where all are welcomed and valued and enjoy equitable opportunities and protections by providing...

- Immigration Legal Services
- Resource and Support Services
- Education and Career Services
- International Exchange Visitor Visa Program
- Community building opportunities
- Advocating for just and humane immigration policies

As New England’s Welcome Center for immigrant and refugee families, we seek to be proactive, responsive and innovative in meeting the needs of immigrant families. Our vision is of a shared society where all people are welcomed, valued, and enjoy equitable opportunities and protections.
Program Accomplishments

Immigration Legal Services

Rian’s legal team of nine attorneys and three paralegals provided expert immigration legal advice and representation to 2,454 immigrants and refugees in 2021. With a focus on health and education we launched partnerships with Dana Farber Institute, immigrant youth serving organization Enroot, and expanded our legal support of immigrant students to include Somerville and Cambridge. We continue our partnerships with Boston Medical Center and Rosie’s Place. Our Immigration Legal Services team also worked hard to support the Afghan and Haitian immigrant communities in response to humanitarian crises.

Highlights include:

- Providing consultations and referrals to members of the Afghan community on options for family reunification, refugee status, and obtaining work permits. We were pleased to hear that one of these consultations helped a student’s 11 family members be admitted to the U.S.
- Assisting over 500 Haitian immigrants in Temporary Protected Status and other cases.
- Supporting 400 clients to become permanent residents so they can live, work and build stable lives in the US.
- Assisting 100 survivors of domestic violence to gain legal status and independence from their abusers.

Education and Career Services

Last year, 288 adult students increased their English language fluency, computer skills, civic knowledge, and educational and employment opportunities through our classes and programs. Our English for Speakers of Other Languages enrollment increased by 29% in 2021 over the previous year. After scaling back our Individual Achievement Program (IAP) because of COVID, we expanded in 2021, hiring Elena Ruiz as IAP manager and increased enrollment tenfold. Under Elena’s direction, our IAP tutors assist ESOL students with resume writing, job applications, continuing education, and literacy development focusing on student goals. Our staff worked hard to improve their own skills, engaging in professional development and peer teaching observations.

Highlights include:

- 142% increase in enrollment of students from Haiti over the past year.
- 70% of students participated in two or more of our education programs.
- 80% of ESOL students enrolled in our spring ESOL courses showed improvement in language skills by the end of the semester.
- 12 students passed their citizenship interviews and became US citizens.
- 17 volunteers and 4 interns served in our programs in 2021.
Resource and Support Services

Through therapeutic counseling, outreach and resource referrals, our team provided stability and hope for 350 people during stressful times. Staff expanded to include a multilingual Social Worker, Tori DiCianni, to better serve immigrants from 22 countries struggling with mental health and resource challenges and we welcomed Sarah Bayer as our new Director of RSS. We continue to see the impacts of Covid on our clients. Loss of jobs and childcare has led to housing instability and access to healthcare is more limited than ever. Locating affordable housing is always a challenge and with the fall-out from Covid, this has reached crisis levels for our most vulnerable immigrant families. Our team has been walking alongside clients, working to ensure clients are accessing the resources for which they are eligible.

Highlights include:
• Bridging the safety-net gap for families, with financial support from the Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative.
• Hosting our first Irish outreach mental health virtual event sharing practices that address stressors brought on by Covid.
• Participation by our Irish Outreach Coordinator in a panel discussion hosted by Ireland’s Crosscare Migrant Group and CIIC, of the research report, ‘Ní neart go cur le chéile - Irish emigrant community experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic’.
• Attending Irish festivals and community events.
• Facilitating tutor and volunteer training with education and legal services teams, and presenting to community social workers on Rian’s services.

Learning Exchange Programs

The U.S. travel ban remained in place for most of 2021 and was finally lifted on November 8th. We resumed our J-1 Visa program for recent graduates and University students with placements. We are excited to be rebuilding our program and offering new and opportunities for Irish students and graduates who come to the United States.

Highlights include:
• Continuing to support J-1 exchange visitors who had chosen to remain in the U.S. when the pandemic hit.
• Working with 970 students and graduates who registered their interest in our program, continually offering advice and updates.
• Issuing 25 DS-2019s upon relaunch in late 2021, for January and February visa start dates.
• Launching a new user-friendly J-1 website which streamlines the visa program processes.
Closing Pandora’s Box

Jennifer, Juan and Alejandro

He has 10 doctors, all specialists. “We have a joke, we say he has a very big advisory group.” - Jennifer

Jennifer and Juan celebrated the arrival of their son, Alejandro in 2014. They were devastated when he was diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder called Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome. A person with this condition has an immune system that does not work properly to protect the body from infections. Wiskott-Aldrich makes it difficult for a child’s bone marrow to produce platelets, making a child prone to bleeding, infections, autoimmune diseases, and lymphoma.

When Alejandro was two years old he received an umbilical cord blood transplant in Colombia. Unfortunately it failed. They were told that Alejandro would need a bone marrow transplant which was unavailable in Colombia. Jennifer and Juan turned to doctors at Dana Farber Boston Children’s Hospital who specialize in Wiskott-Aldrich. At the American embassy in Colombia they got a visa the same day, “It was a miracle”, said Jennifer.

They headed to Boston with “a suitcase packed for 10 days, car keys, our apartment keys, we didn’t say goodbye to our families, our jobs….It was very hard”, said Jennifer.
What they thought would be a short trip turned into years. Doctors in Boston were able to help, but treatment is not fast. Their social worker connected them to the Rian Immigrant Center’s attorneys for help extending their visas.

Alejandro received the bone marrow transplant when he was just three years old. Says Jennifer, “It was a second opportunity at life.” They were so thankful to the donor who saved Alejandro. Juan registered as a Bone Marrow Donor and was matched with a person in New Zealand. They all hope more people will consider becoming bone marrow donors to save more lives.

But after the transplant Alejandro had complications. His lungs did not accept the transplant and he needed shots every day for a year. He had inflammation in his brain and spinal cord. The doctors call Alejandro’s case a “pandora’s box.” Over the years Rian worked alongside the family to navigate their visa options. In 2021 their attorney got permission for the family to remain in the United States through the Medical Deferred Action program. After many treatments, medications and clinical trials Alejandro is doing well. He receives Immunoglobulin replacement (IgG) therapy every 15 days, speech therapy, physical therapy and occupational therapy. “He’s a happy boy even though his childhood has not been normal….If we don’t tell people what he has been through nobody would know…He’s interested in the solar system, and knows all the planets, suns, galaxies and moons”, Jennifer says.

While Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome cannot be cured, Alejandro’s treatments work to stabilize his health. However, his body is at high-risk of cancer and is considered high-risk for contracting COVID. “The best thing for him is to be here. We have found many angels that have helped us all these years, and one of the angels is Rian”, said Jennifer.

At Rian we recently formalized a partnership with Dana Farber Cancer Institute and Health Law Advocates. This partnership will ensure that families like Alejandro’s not only receive the stabilizing immigration services they need, but also access to comprehensive health insurance to cover their complex needs.
George

Born and raised in Ghana, George loved to travel. After traveling to Italy, Denmark, and Sweden he settled in Germany for 8.5 years. Eventually, George returned to Ghana to pursue his dream of opening a restaurant and discotech on the beach.

Ghana had a military government riddled with corruption which had bled into infrastructure and George found himself in a bad situation with his contracting team. Their abuses made George decide to sell is property for $5,000, half of what he paid. He decided it was time to move to the United States.

George arrived undocumented in the U.S in September of 1998. He had his ups and downs, including a racist and challenging supervisor at a factory where he worked but eventually settled into a security job which he held for ten years.

In March of 2003 George met a very kind woman named Ella through friends. “As soon as I met her she liked me and I liked her.” Soon George and Ella married and they lived happily together for 18 years.

Sadly though, things took a turn for the worse. George found himself out of work and sold his car for money to live on. In 2018 Ella had a mild stroke and then another. In August of 2021 she suffered a massive stroke. Fifteen days later she passed away and George's life changed completely. Struggling with the loss of his wife and no longer receiving benefits, George lived on the money from the car which was dwindling. George and Ella had not applied for a green card and he would need to wait two years to get one. “Two years living in the United States without a job and without any income is very hard.”

He had been calling everywhere for help navigating his life without Ella and without financial support. Tori DiCianni, one of Rian's social workers, stepped in to help. Tori helped George navigate his housing situation when he was evicted, and apply for emergency funding through Rian. She connected him to a senior center in his hometown of North Attleboro so he could find community. As importantly, she provided accompaniment and support in managing the stress of his recent losses and thinking through how to move forward.

Without a green card though, George decided to return to Ghana, where he plans to live with a few of his siblings and their families on a property that his parents left them. He is interested in returning to Accra, where there are more business opportunities. However, if his immigration status could be changed today he would stay in the US.

Rian is lucky to be able to support clients like George and continues to advocate for immigration law reform.
In 2010 Linda came to the United States from El Salvador in search of a better life. She traveled alone to San Francisco, California where she spent two weeks visiting family before heading to Boston where she would live with her nephew. “I moved to the US seeking a better life. Before I moved to the United States I worked in social work and I helped with training the communities most vulnerable.”

To connect with her new community Linda volunteered with a local nonprofit organization. “I volunteered for two years. The first person I met here is now my boss.”

The organization is a grassroots group that was formed to encourage civic engagement in her neighborhood. Recently, Linda has been working to share information with the community about the Work & Family Mobility Act, which would enable state residents to apply for a standard Massachusetts driver’s license, regardless of immigrant status. As an immigrant herself Linda understands the challenges immigrants in her community face.

“Today I work as a lead organizer during the day. I have a lot of meetings and trainings in English and sometimes I don’t participate or ask questions because I feel shy to speak,” Linda says.” Linda enrolled in Rian’s evening English classes to boost her confidence and skills, and has enjoyed the classes immensely. “I work hard because I would like to one day become a citizen of the United States and be able to Vote. I love the teacher, the grammar, the speaking, she (the teacher) pushes us to speak”

Once Linda completes her immigration process, her dream is to be able to visit her 7 siblings and her 20+ nieces and nephews in El Salvador.
Ever since he was in high school Matthew Rooney wanted to gain experience in the United States sports industry. Growing up in Belfast in Northern Ireland, Matthew had a passion for sports, and in his senior year of high school earned a sports scholarship to study abroad in Virginia.

Reflecting on that year, Matthew says, “I loved America and everything about it, I knew I wanted to come back at some point. I knew I wanted to go to America for a placement to work in sports.” Unfortunately for Matthew and other hopeful J-1 visitors, Covid put an abrupt halt to their plans to intern in the U.S. Instead, Matthew got a placement in Ireland working at a sports technology company, but continued to search for a potential internship match in the U.S. and connected with an old high school friend who had a contact at the PGA tour. Matthew says, “An opening came up for an operations internship at the World Golf Championships in Austin, Texas at the end of March. I interviewed and got the role. I hadn't even thought about getting a visa so the next question was how to even get over!”

It wasn’t long until Matthew found out about Rian’s J-1 Immigrant Center intern program - and got in touch with Jude Clarke, Senior Learning Exchange Program Manager, Ireland. Matthew said “... Jude was great, I was emailing him so much at weird times of the day because I really wanted to get this sorted. He really did everything he could to get this going, I couldn’t have done it without him.” Now that Matthew has safely arrived in Austin Texas, he’s excited to get his internship underway and learn more about the business side of sports, such as how events like the PGA Tour are run, and he’s eager to work with his managers and the vendors.

“The amount I’ve learned in the first week is mad ... I’ll bring that ...to my final year at university, my final dissertation and then [finding] a job after graduation and contributing to the Irish and UK sports industry back home. The main thing for me is getting experience here so I can bring it back. It hasn’t sunk in yet, what I’m doing, but I’m really enjoying it!”
Advocacy

Small Actions Make a Big Difference

For over 30 years, Rian has worked to ensure that the United States and Massachusetts are welcoming to people from around the world by promoting comprehensive immigration reform, protecting human rights, and advocating for immigrant protections and opportunities.

Working alongside Mass Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), Irish Pastoral Center, members of the Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative and others, Rian influences a range of federal, state and municipal policies. In 2021 we met with legislators and submitted testimony on several issues including the driver’s license bill and Safe Communities Act.

- The Work & Family Mobility Act: The Work and Family Mobility Act would enable all qualified state residents to apply for a Massachusetts driver’s license, regardless of immigration status. For up to 250,000 undocumented immigrants in our communities, not having a license can create enormous hardships as well as safety concerns when driving is unavoidable. Rian is advocating for passage of this bill as a member of the Driving Families Forward Coalition.

- Safe Communities Act: As a member of the Safe Communities Coalition, Rian strongly advocates for the passage of the Safe Communities Act (SCA). The SCA would protect the civil rights, safety and well-being of all residents of Massachusetts by drawing a clear line between immigration enforcement and public safety and community law enforcement.

To learn more about issues that are important to Rian and the immigrant community please visit: riancenter.org
Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative

Founded by Rian Immigrant Center, Agencia ALPHA and Brazilian Worker Center in April 2020, the Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative (MIC) is a group of 15 partner organizations who came together to support immigrants and refugees from across the Commonwealth who were experiencing serious hardship as a result of Covid.

Today, MIC’s strategic priorities are to provide emergency cash and food assistance, to engage in shared capacity building, to provide immigration legal services, and workforce development to immigrants; and to advocate for fair immigration policies.

In 2021 MIC

- Distributed emergency cash and food assistance to more than 90,000 immigrants and their families.
- In partnership with CIC Health and Boston Health Commission, advocated for vaccine equity and facilitated over 3500 vaccinations, including 597 community members on Immigrant Day at Reggie Lewis Center.
- Supported 300 immigrant youth participating in leadership training through the Dreamers Leadership Project, empowering them through civic leadership opportunities, skills development, work readiness training and culturally competent mentoring.
- Conducted a study to inform planning around health care access, safety in the workplace, and housing security.

MIC Partner Organizations

- Agencia ALPHA
- Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC)
- Boston International Newcomers Academy (Boston Center for Collaborative Education)
- Brazilian Worker Center
- Caribbean Youth Club
- Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores (New Bedford)
- Centro Presente
- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI)
- ICNA Relief
- Immigrant Family Services Institute (IFSI)
- MetroWest Workers Center: CASA (Framingham)
- New North Citizens Council
- Pioneer Valley Workers Center
- Rian Immigrant Center
- Sociedad Latina
Volunteers Pay it Forward

Our work could not be done without our team of dedicated volunteers and interns. Volunteers support our programs in many ways. They tutor students working to improve their English, welcome visitors and direct people in guest services, and work on special projects.

Sarvesh Malik, an international student from India pursuing a Master’s in Project Management at Northeastern University came to Rian because of his love of volunteering and helping with special projects. Says Sarvesh, “[Rian] was building a children’s play area and being from civil engineering I like assembling things so I volunteered for that position.” As a Welcome Center for immigrant families, safe and welcoming spaces are important. Rian recently completed renovations that include a new Family Room and Sarvesh’s help assembling toys and furniture was key.

“I am hoping to [continue to] volunteer at Rian because I like the people. It was fun working there and I got to learn many things.”

We are incredibly grateful for Sarvesh and the rest of our volunteers for supporting our mission!

Thank you Rian Volunteers

Rian’s annual Solas Awards Celebration last year was a wonderful success thanks to our donors and video production team! Coming together virtually with host Jim Braude of WGBH’s Greater Boston, we honored Dr. Sarah Kimball, José Nieto and Enes Kanter along with a beautiful musical performance by Tolú Makay. We exceeded our fundraising goal, and greatly enjoyed seeing more than 700 friends at the virtual meet and greet reception. It was incredible to have everyone in the same space virtually.

Thank you for joining us.

Save the Date: Our 2022 Solas Awards will be an in-person breakfast event on October 13 and planning is well underway.

Please contact Priya Murali at 617-934-0775, or pmurali@riancenter.org for more details.
After 20 years serving as Rian’s Director of Finance, Gjergji Cani is retiring. All of us at Rian are so grateful to Gjergji for his keen financial oversight, his behind the scenes dedication, and his commitment to our mission and vision. We deeply appreciate his leadership in the fiscal sponsorship of the Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative.

We will miss him, and wish him and his family much happiness. Rian is delighted to welcome Pranathi Kesireddy as our new Director of Finance. Welcome Pranathi!

We are also very grateful to Janey Tallarida for her 12 years of service to our center, and wish her well as she sets off to hike the Appalachian Trail, and on her next chapter. May the road rise up to meet Gjergji and Janey!
2021 Institutional Supporters

Rian is extremely grateful to its funding partners

Department of Foreign Affairs, Government of Ireland
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Irish Charitable Society

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Boston Public Schools
Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition
CIC Health
Coalition of Irish Immigrant Centers
Dana Farber Cancer Institute
Driving Families Forward Coalition
Enroot

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The Ireland Funds
The Shapiro Foundation
Town Fair Tire Foundation
Webster Bank

Health Law Advocates
Jewish Vocational Services
Massachusetts League of Community Healthcare Centers
Mass Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative
Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement
Office of the Attorney General, Maura Healey
Rosie’s Place
Safe Communities Coalition
State Street Corporation
Provided legal advice and representation to 2,454 immigrants and their families.

Informed 970 young Irish men and women interested in the J-1 exchange visitor program.

Empowered 288 students who gained English language fluency, technology skills and employment opportunities.

Offered stability and hope for 350 immigrants and refugees during stressful times.

Emergency relief and support to 90,000 individuals and families.