**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**   
January 26, 2015

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Milwaukee Refugee Group to Tour Capitol, Advocate for Scholarship Expansion**

**Milwaukee, Jan. 26, 2015** --- Refugees from **International Learning Center (ILC)**, a program of **Neighborhood House of Milwaukee**, are going to Madison on Tuesday, February 10th 2015 to tour the State Capitol building and speak with representatives about expanding a key college aid program for minorities. The event is a real-life civics lesson for the adult students, many of whom come from countries that lack a functioning democracy, and a boost to their preparation for the rigorous US citizenship exam.

The group, which includes refugees from Southeast Asia and Africa, plans to meet with **State Senator Chris Larson** and **State Representative Evan Goyke** to advocate for changes to the state’s **Minority Retention Grant**, a college aid program targeting under-represented and under-resourced groups. The grant, which was legislated in the wake of the Viet Nam war, currently benefits only refugees from Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia, in addition to African-American and Hispanic minorities. The group would like to see the grant’s benefits expanded to include all refugee groups, as they are all minorities with low representation in higher education and/or low income.

The proposal to change the Minority Retention Grant was initiated by an ILC student from Burma who, after attaining his GED, found he was excluded from significant college aid because he is from an ethnic group not specifically named in the grant.

**Neighborhood House helped 24 people attain citizenship last year**. Funding from the **Milwaukee Peace Corps Association** is providing transportation for this event. The tour coincides with an important photo exhibition, **Hunger Next Door,** sponsored by Hunger Task Force, featuring large format portraits of people affected by hunger, including a number of refugees from International Learning Center.

“*To see newcomers like these actually sit in the seat of power reminds us what democracy is all about, and how a community organization works to empower people, especially those at the margins, to participate fully and actively in all aspects of society,*” said **Neighborhood House’s Executive Director Jeff Martinka**.

“*Real empowerment comes from advocating and speaking for oneself and one’s community,”* said **International Learning Center’s Citizenship Instructor Crystal Custalow**. “*This is an opportunity for refugees to speak in a personal way in support of legislation that can make a difference in their futures, and their children’s futures*.”

WEBSITES: <http://ilcmilwaukee.wordpress.com/>, http://nh-milw.org/  
PRESS: <http://www.radiomilwaukee.org/education-youth/international-learning-center>   
HUNGER NEXT DOOR: https://www.hungertaskforce.org/advocacy/hunger-next-door/

**ABOUT NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE:***Neighborhood House of Milwaukee is a a community center in the settlement house tradition now in its 70th year, founded to help strengthen children and families in some of the city’s most under-served neighborhoods. The agency has touched the lives of nearly a million children and adults since 1945. Its highly regarded, award-winning programs serve infants & toddlers, school-age and teen youth, adults and families, refugees and immigrants. More at* [***www.nh-milw.org***](http://www.nh-milw.org)