



NH PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

DECEMBER 2023

Courtesy Photo

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Maggie Fogarty, NH Program Director

“we are living in impossible times. if it were fiction, it would be critiqued as hyperbolic. if it were nightmares we would never sleep. we are living in times created by our own species...our visions are ropes through the devastation. look further ahead, like our ancestors did, look further. extend, hold on, pull, evolve.” — adrienne maree brown

Dear friends and supporters of AFSC,

Tender greetings from AFSC’s New Hampshire Program. This year ends with heartbreaking realities in every direction – war and terror in the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe; unrelenting gun violence in US communities; growing anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia; a rapidly escalating climate crisis; grave threats to our democracy; and an assault on the rights and well-being of migrants and refugees at our own borders and throughout the world. “Impossible times,” indeed.

The work that we do together, right here in New Hampshire, is our earnest effort to bear witness to these realities, to resist despair, to stop the harm and heal the suffering, to imagine together a peaceful and welcoming world, and to remember every day that we can build that world of love and justice right where we are.

Throughout this past year, we had many opportunities to do good work together - in immigrant communities and with people beginning new lives after incarceration, at the State House and Congressional offices and City Hall, at vigils and rallies, in workshops and coalition meetings, and in our weekly visits at the detention center. We encouraged emerging leaders as they raised their voices for self-advocacy and system change, and we gathered people of all ages and backgrounds for informed and timely actions in support of humane public policies. This work, done in community with spirited and dedicated companions, nurtured our hope, strengthened our resolve, and inspired our joy. It has been our “ropes through the devastation.”

Read on for some highlights from our magnificent team. We will continue alongside you in the new year, doing our part to “extend, hold on, pull, evolve,” facing impossible times with irrepressible love.



Photo Credit: Becky Field, FieldWork Photos



Photo Credit: Grace Kindeke

WELCOME KATHLEEN WOOTEN!

We are delighted to welcome Kathleen Wooten to the NH team as our State House Watch researcher and data manager for the 2024 state legislative session. Kathleen is well known to Friends throughout New England for her work to support event planning, digital access, and communications including website content and social media. Kathleen is a member of Lawrence (MA) Monthly Meeting; she lives in Methuen, MA. Maggie, Grace and Kathleen look forward to bringing you AFSC’s State House Watch newsletter every week from January through June. Watch for a season opener edition in December. Subscribe today! [Bit.ly/AFSCsubscribeSHW](https://bit.ly/AFSCsubscribeSHW)



Courtesy Photo

HEALING JUSTICE

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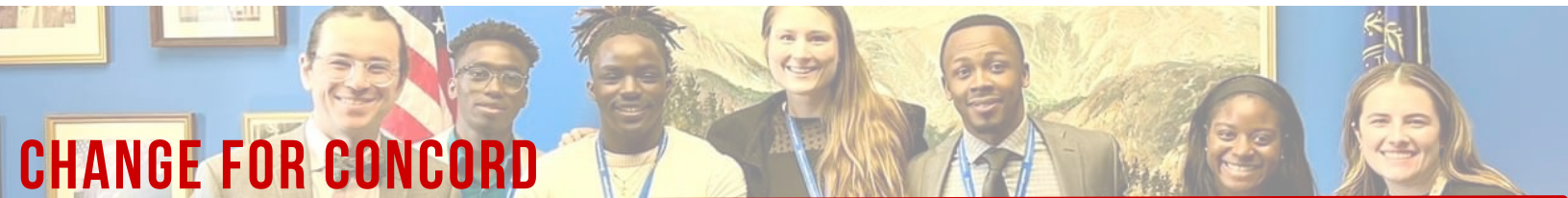
Now in its third year, the Healing Justice Internship has blossomed with Ophelia Burnett in the role. Ophelia's advocacy for the rights and wellbeing of incarcerated people in NH can be seen through her accompaniment of directly impacted leaders and her work to advance policies that uphold the dignity of incarcerated people. Her advocacy helped secure passage of a law requiring all county jails and state prisons to provide menstrual hygiene products at no cost for all incarcerated people who menstruate.

In addition to testifying and advocating at the State House, Ophelia has taken the helm to convene our monthly NH Abolition Network. With Grace Kindeke, she has co-created and co-facilitated a series of abolition workshops at Hanover Friends Meeting and the World Fellowship Center. Dedicated to creating a community-based reentry program to support the employment, housing, and wellness needs of reentering people, Ophelia has spent months researching and interviewing directly affected people on their reentry experiences. We are grateful to have received a grant from AFSC's Strategic Plan Implementation Fund (SPIF) to provide training and mentoring for Ophelia and a cohort of directly-impacted community members as they prepare to launch a pilot program for women returning to the community from jail and prison in New Hampshire.

The Healing Justice Organizer Internship is made possible by a grant from the NH Charitable Foundation and support from the Arnie Alpert Action Fund. The internship is designed to build skills for community organizing, civic engagement, and policy advocacy to strengthen the leadership of community members impacted by incarceration in the work of system change for justice and equity.



CHANGE FOR CONCORD



Change for Concord, a community organizing team of young adult leaders, ages 18 to 30 who live and work in Concord, achieved an exciting victory in June when the City Council approved funding for night lights at the Keach Park soccer field. The group, which is led by AFSC's Grassroots Organizer intern Fisto Ndayishimiye, had sought this investment over several years as a demonstration of commitment to the residents of Concord's most diverse neighborhoods. C4C members mobilized strong community support from young people and residents of all ages.

Change for Concord members also hosted a first-ever celebration of Juneteenth in Concord's City Plaza, and advocated for inclusion of BIPOC and immigrant residents in the City's planning process for diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and belonging. During the recent municipal elections, C4C members developed questions for the candidates for Mayor and City Councilor-at-large and interviewed them on camera to share as a resource for young voters.

Fisto traveled to Kenya in September as part of an international gathering of AFSC's Youth Network, and joined the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) Advocacy Corps to learn with other young leaders about federal policy advocacy.

The Grassroots Organizer Internship, now in its 8th year, is made possible by a grant from the You Have Our Trust fund and several major donors. The internship is designed to build skills for community organizing, issue advocacy, and effective leadership for racial, social and economic justice.





ORGANIZING FOR IMMIGRANT JUSTICE

Our work for immigrant justice in New Hampshire is dynamic and varied. We convene the NH Immigrant Rights Network for policy advocacy at the federal, state, and local levels. This past year, we advocated for expanded driver license access for immigrants, and in opposition to an anti-sanctuary cities bill. We opposed the creation of the new Northern Border Alliance task force which will direct NH tax dollars to border enforcement in the North Country, without any data to support the need. We'll continue to organize with other leaders to engage North Country residents and lawmakers to call for divestment from anti-immigrant political schemes and to invest in real human needs such as public education, broadband access, affordable housing, and recovery supports. At the federal level, we advocated with our Members of Congress for the rights of asylum seekers, a path to citizenship, cuts in funding for ICE and CBP, and an end to Title 42. You may have noticed lots of butterflies at actions we organized through the Stronger Together coalition.

We are completing our tenth year as co-leaders of the NH Immigrant Visitation Program at the Strafford County jail in Dover, NH in partnership with the NH Conference of the United Church of Christ Immigrant and Refugee Support Group (IRSG). Our weekly visits with immigrants in ICE custody are an opportunity to provide a listening ear, emotional and spiritual support, and essential resources for self-advocacy as immigrants navigate the complexity, cruelty and isolation of detention and removal proceedings. Our close partnership with the IRSG, as well as the ACLU and NH Legal Assistance have enabled us to provide humane and liberating supports for those who suffer the effects of our harmful immigration system. We support faith communities and regional networks to offer sanctuary, solidarity, and accompaniment for undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers living in New Hampshire.



We gather Black and African immigrants to support their leadership, civic engagement, self-advocacy and well-being, building community together as Umokuumani.



In September, we gathered a 'welcoming committee' to celebrate as Nayeli walked out of the Merrimack County jail and into the warm embrace of a Seacoast host home. These moments of liberation and connection nurture our spirits for the ongoing and urgent work to create a society that welcomes all.

STATE HOUSE WATCH

Photo Credits (clockwise from top): Arnie Alpert, Maria Perez, Maggie Fogarty, Courtesy Photo

Among the key bills of the 2023 state legislative session was the state budget, which passed in early June with strong bipartisan agreement in both bodies. The outcome was mixed, but there were many reasons for celebration, including: a 12% wage increase for state workers; a seven-year reauthorization for expanded Medicaid; an increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates; Medicaid eligibility for some immigrants; a public notification requirement in advance of immigration checkpoints; restoration of the Education Trust fund and increased aid for school districts; critical investments in childcare and affordable housing; full funding for the Alcohol Abuse, Prevention and Treatment Fund; inclusion of the Healthy Aging System of Care; and a much smaller appropriation of funds for a new prison than was originally proposed by the governor. One of our biggest disappointments was the inclusion of \$1.4 million of non-lapsing funds for the Northern Border Alliance, a program that will engage local, county and state police in border patrol activities at the northern border.

Throughout the process, the NH Campaign for a People's Budget, convened by AFSC, engaged a diverse group of residents through community conversations, joint statements, action alerts and visibilities. We thank everyone who took steps to make your voices heard. We believe it made a difference, and we know that working together across many interconnected priorities is the only way forward if we are going to get the budget we deserve.



Photo Credit: Grace Kindeke

THANK YOU FROM OUR SUPPORT COMMITTEE!

The Support Committee and staff of the NH Program want to thank all of the donors, event sponsors, foundations, and volunteers who made our work possible this past year.

Our funders include the NH Charitable Foundation, the Clowes Fund, the Anne Slade Frey Charitable Trust, NH Listens, and the “You Have Our Trust” fund.

Please visit our website at www.AFSC.org/NH for more information, and to make a donation.



*Top row (left to right): Anthony Payton, Anne Saunders, Candace Cole-McCrea (co-clerk), Ginny Cole, Jennifer Keller
Bottom row (left to right): Lidia Yen, Lina Shayo, Margaret Hawthorn, Nan Beiter (co-clerk), Sebastian Fuentes*

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!

The NH Program does most of our work in collaboration with others through coalitions and informal networks, and this year was no exception. We are thankful for our longstanding partnerships as well as new relationships, and the many opportunities to work together for the greater good.

AFSC-NH convenes the NH Immigrant Rights Network, the Campaign for a People's Budget, the Abolition Network, Change for Concord and Umokuumani, a group for Black and African immigrants. We coordinate NH Voices of Faith; we co-lead the NH Immigrant Visitation Program; and we are active in the NH Host Home Network, the Faith & Labor Coalition, the RENEWS Coalition, the NH Peacekeeper Team, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Coalition.

Our “State House Watch” newsletter is published weekly during the legislative season from January through June. Bookmark afsc.org/NHStateHouseWatch to subscribe to the newsletter and read past and current issues.

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(603) 224-2407

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