

February 20th, 2024

Dear members of the Senate Economic Development Committee,

I am a construction worker in Burlington and a member of the immigrant community. Specifically, I work in housing construction, and I give it my all to build quality houses because I know that families will be living in them.

I spend my days working so that others will have a roof over their heads, but when I try to find a home for my family and myself, all I find are closed doors. I have even been denied an apartment at the very same houses that I had helped build!

I want to tell you about my experiences trying to rent an apartment. My family and I have struggled greatly. Everyone told us no because we don't have a social security number. When I finally found an apartment that would rent to us, the landlord charged me \$10,500 to move in. This was two months rent and two security deposits. We didn't have enough money to pay the full amount that he demanded, but we had no other options, so we took out a loan from the same landlord. This has put our family in a very difficult decision, especially because we have young children and they are the ones who suffer the most.

We face lots of discrimination and racism in the housing system. In another place that we looked at, the listing was for a certain amount and said that utilities were included. But when we went to see the apartment, and the landlord saw that we were immigrants without a social security number, the price he told us went up by \$400 per month and he told us utilities would not be included.

We contribute to this state in many ways, but we aren't just here to provide our labor. We are here because we are part of Vermont and this state needs to ensure that we have the same opportunities and access to housing as any other person.

Please remember that you have an opportunity to make a change in our lives.

Thank you,

Diego