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Michael Kiey

Statement to joint meeting of Senate and House Appropriations Committees on Gov Budget

Good evening, I'm Michael Kiey, a citizen of Vermont since May 1994. I'm licensed to practice law in Vermont and New York. I've worked in private Industry and the public sector.

I support Gov. Scott's proposal to provide at least \$2 mil to immigrant families in Vermont excluded from stimulus payments.

My experience with the migrant community is shaped significantly by volunteer legal work in May 2015 for migrant women and children at the private jail for them in Dilley, TX. There I learned about the conditions that drove families to leave homes and other family members to seek relief from cruel moral and economic conditions.

The question today is whether we will consciously make the value judgment that the immigrant families that sustain our dairy industry will continue to be left out. Left out even though by any standard they are essential workers. They toil in isolation for 60+ hours a week in extreme conditions. Some Vermonters don't know they exist. Yet these are the humans who work to shape what those who advertise Vermont call the "Vermont mystique", our working landscapes of green and cows in the pasture.

The spiritual writings that continue to shape me make it clear that we all share a common bond of equal creation; we are part of a spiritual family. If you share this bond, our actions in all our affairs will reveal whether this conviction is real or only lip service.

Vermont immigrant families are our neighbors-"nuestros vecinos".

Covid-19 gives our public leaders this opportunity to include immigrant families in our community. It's the right thing to do; and, they are a key part of our state economy I urge you to do so.

Thank you.