

From: Maida Townsend [MTownsend@leg.state.vt.us]
Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 5:10 PM
To: Theresa Utton
Subject: Fwd: Human Services/Appropriations: New Vermonters

To add to the testimony?

From: "Fitch, Diane E." <diane.fitch@wright.edu>
Date: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 at 1:33:26 PM
To: "Maida Townsend" <MTownsend@leg.state.vt.us>
Subject: Human Services/Appropriations: New Vermonters

Dear Ms Townsend,

I am writing as a concerned constituent.

The United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, through the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program in Colchester, resettles all refugees coming to Vermont. These New Vermonters would be severely negatively impacted if the governor's budget is passed.

Please read this from the Vermont USCRI director Amila Merdzanovic:

The Governor's budget proposal calls for to the suspension of Reach Up contracts with 14 agencies around the state, USCRI Vermont included. Two weeks ago, we were informed of this proposal by Sean Brown, Deputy Commissioner at ESD. He explained that this cut would result in \$1.6 million savings, \$800K of which would be reallocated to some of the contractors but not all.

Over the past two years, refugee resettlement has gone through what is undeniably the most challenging time in VRRP's 30+ year history. The Trump administration's policies have not only been ungenerous, unkind, and unwise in the area of refugee resettlement but they also threaten to dismantle the structure of the resettlement agencies and to scatter to the winds the wisdom of their staff members. But, my staff, volunteers and I are persisting.

If implemented, aspects of the Governor's current budget proposal regarding Reach Up could have a profound effect on newly arriving refugees as well as on some of those already resettled.

We have been a one-stop-shop for comprehensive, culturally and linguistically appropriate wrap-around services to all newly arriving refugees and asylees. This highly effective approach is being fragmented by several factors, including this one. Since 2011, the contract with the state to provide Reach Up case management in-house has allowed us to work seamlessly with some of the most vulnerable families and individuals many of whom are now contributing members of our community. If the Governor's proposal is approved and if USCRI Vermont is not among the agencies to receive continued funding, no case management services will be available in-house beyond 90 days. This would have a profound effect on the well-being of refugee families. USCRI Vermont receives a little over \$76,000 per year which funds 1FTE. Our outcomes have been the strongest in the district with refugees going to work within one or two months after arrival. The case manager assists with all aspects of integration including housing, employment, transportation, child care, community orientation, sorting out mail, etc... This level of support would not be replicated by DCF case managers, not for lack of will but, they are simply not set up in the same manner we are. We are in the community working hand-in-hand with people.

Thank you for working for these newest Vermonters!

Diane Fitch
Calais