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February 19, 2024

To the Senate Economic Development Committee:

Concerning: Housing Access for Immigrant Families

1. Define Immigration Status as a Protected Class
2. Provide alternatives to social security numbers in the housing application process

The Central Vermont Refugee Action Network, based in Central Vermont, joins with Migrant Justice in asking that landlords not discriminate against rental applicants based on their immigration status, as determined by whether potential renters can show a social security number or not. Housing access is tremendously scarce at this time. We are aware of situations in which the only housing available is through an employer, often in very crowded substandard situations or without potable water. Not only is the housing substandard, but because the housing is contingent on employment by the landlord, these persons are boxed into continuing to work for the employer, sometimes in difficult jobs with long hours or in dangerous situations. Anything that can be done to alleviate this untenable state of affairs would be of help. People living and working in this situation cannot easily testify to this committee without negative consequences.

Since most of the other immigrants with whom we work are given "wrap-around" services by our organization, including housing that our organization arranges, the lack of a social security number does not factor into their housing situation, but comes up again and again in training programs through Capstone, applications for daycare, medical applications and many other places. Being able to use alternate ID's would be helpful in other areas besides housing.

Sincerely,

Rachel Walker Cogbill, CVRAN President

On behalf of the Central Vermont Refugee Action Network