

Hi, My name is Arena, and im a student at Colchester Highschool, here representing Outright Vermont.

I'm here today to ask this committee to please support the passage of S.227. I want to speak from my experience as a student. I have close friends and people in my community who I see and interact with almost everyday who come from immigrant backgrounds. These are people who work hard, who prioritize their education and who have gone out of their way to advocate for themselves and for others in our community.

What stands out to me is that they are doing all of this while also carrying a level of stress that many other students don't have to think about. There is a lot of uncertainty outside of school - - about their families, and things that go far beyond what most of us deal with day to day.

And still they show up. They participate, they lead and they are constantly fighting for change. That takes a huge amount of strength. But it shouldn't have to be that hard just to feel safe enough to learn.

School should be a place where students don't have to divide their attention between their education and what might happen during or after it. This is why this bill matters, this bill would help students walk into school with more certainty that they are in a safe environment. It creates clear policies that schools can follow and helps connect students with trusted organizations that can provide support if they are dealing with immigration related concerns.

That kind of support makes a real difference. It means students don't have to figure everything out on their own while also trying to succeed in school. I see how hard my friends and community members are already working just to be heard and to feel safe. Supporting this bill is a way to meet them halfway and give them the sense of security they deserve.

Thank you