



March 18, 2025

Testimony re Housing Bill H.169

In our work as community volunteers in Chittenden County with people seeking asylum, we have certainly experienced barriers over the past five and a half years in finding housing for both individuals and families. In fact, all seven groups in our statewide collaboration – the Vermont-New Hampshire Asylum Support Network – have experienced housing barriers and have endeavored to address them and work for change.

One example is when we were struggling to find housing for a large family of eight, with mom expecting another child, and it was so difficult to find anything in the greater Burlington area. As always, CASAN was ready to provide a cover letter conveying our willingness to co-sign, committing to pay the security and rent in full for the family until they could work and gradually begin to pay their own rent. (For this family, it took nearly two years in the legal asylum process until they received work permits!)

I went in person to speak with the landlord, but the staff at this larger rental company stated that they would not even accept the letter nor an application. I recall feeling belittled and rebuffed, and was glad the family had not gone with me, to be treated in a dehumanizing manner and turned away.

Fortunately, our group was able to find a place for the family in another county, through an open-hearted landlord willing to work with us. We have found and developed positive working relationships with a few landlords and a housing authority, who are appreciative of our support and know they can trust us to follow through and pay the rent. This is the only way we have been able to find rental housing for our families, besides some housing donated by members of the community.

There needs to be a change to open doors for immigrants coming to live and work in our communities. We urge you to support H.169.

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