



Testimony in Support of H.169: Expanding Housing Protections for Immigrant Families

To House Committee on General and Housing,

My name is Jayna Ahsaf, and I am writing to voice my strong support for H.169. This legislation addresses a pressing and often overlooked issue: the housing barriers faced by immigrant families in Vermont. Immigrant families are integral to the fabric of our communities, contributing significantly to key economic sectors. Yet, many of these families—particularly those who are undocumented, of mixed-status, or seeking asylum—encounter systemic obstacles when trying to secure stable housing.

A major barrier stems from discrimination based on citizenship and immigration status, as well as the widespread practice of requiring social security numbers during the rental application process. These practices unfairly exclude immigrant families from accessing housing. Consequently, many families are forced to rely on employer-provided housing or endure unsafe and inadequate living conditions. This perpetuates a cycle of instability and normalizes systems of exploitation and abuse, affecting not only the families themselves but the entire social fabric of our community. H.169 seeks to explicitly begin to address this injustice by adding “citizenship and immigration status” to the list of protected classes under the Vermont Fair Housing and Public Accommodations Act. This simple yet powerful change would provide critical protections against discriminatory housing practices, ensuring that immigrant families have an equitable chance to find safe and stable homes.

The inclusion of citizenship and immigration status among protected classes sends a clear message: Vermont stands for fairness, inclusivity, and opportunity for all its community members. Expanding these protections is not only a step toward a more thriving Vermont community, but also a reaffirmation of Vermont's values as a state that welcomes and supports its diverse population in a time where the immigrant community is under severe attack.

I urge this body to support H.169 and its provision to protect against discrimination based on citizenship and immigration status. By doing so, we can take a meaningful step toward fostering a more just Vermont for everyone.

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