

March 8, 2023

To: House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services

Re: HB 3176

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Scharf, and members of the committee:

My name is Cristina Delgado, and I am an advocate for immigrant rights from Washington County. I am writing in favor of funding housing and supportive services for newly arrived immigrants seeking protection in the US through HB 3176.

I have been working with asylum seekers in Washington County for the past five years and I realized that most people I have worked with could have benefited from case management support in various areas. Offering case management services can be a barrier to community groups or nonprofits because there may be limited funding or no funding for this type of work. For the past five years I have had to limit the number of people I can support through case management work because of limited resources and capacity.

Some of the areas where I have been able to support some asylum seekers include:

- To support them in navigating the housing system.
- I have been an interpreter between people and landlords or to help translate documents related to housing. On some occasions I have had to advocate for people who are at risk of eviction because they have work limitations.
- In other situations, I helped people with delivering food baskets or by promoting their food sales or directing them to local food pantries.
- On a few occasions I spent an entire day with a family looking for rental assistance until we found limited resources.
- Other services that have been critical have been providing general orientation to people on how to use public transportation, identifying locations where to buy over the counter medicine, or where to print documents.
- I have seen how many of the people I have worked with have faced injustices, and for that reason I have also been able to provide general know your rights information so that they could feel more comfortable advocating for their rights.

I have seen how the limited accompaniment that we have been able to provide people with has made them feel that they belong in this community, and that they have a support network that they can count on as they navigate systems and resources in this country. Working with asylum seekers has reaffirmed to me the fact that their needs are in many ways different from the needs of immigrants that have been here for a longer period of time, or people that can qualify for federal or state services.

I am happy to see that HB 3176 is proposing some solutions to this problem, and would like to suggest the following amendments to address the inequity of benefits allocated to asylum seekers:

- I propose adding language to specifically identify “newly arrived immigrants seeking protection in the U.S and refugees”, or “immigrants/asylum seekers and refugees”.
- To include housing assistance as an explicit priority to both short-term and long-term provisions in the bill is an important addition.
- I would like to see a more formal accountability structure for grantees that includes accountability to the impacted community.

Thank you for your time. Yes, to bills like HB 3176.

Sincerely,

Cristina Delgado

Immigrant Rights Advocate from Washington County