



OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
332 Dirksen Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

April 13, 2022

Dear Senator Sanders,

I write to support the Community Asylum Seekers Projects (CASP) proposal for a Vermont Asylum Assistance Project. I met with representatives from CASP last fall and heard about this project, which is being planned in collaboration between CASP and pro bono asylum attorneys in Vermont. It meets a crucial need for Vermont's immigrant population, which is expected to grow when federal restrictions on asylum are lifted in May.

The purpose of this project is to build Vermont's legal capacity to welcome asylum seekers and Afghan evacuees. Funding will be aimed at addressing the shortage of pro bono legal assistance in the state and promoting the rights of immigrant communities and asylum-seekers living in Vermont. I recently met with two asylum seekers and their advocates in Brattleboro a few months ago and can attest to the difficulties faced by this population, particularly with regard to navigating the legal system. I've also met with several Afghan refugees here in Vermont who arrived as "humanitarian parolees" and who need access to legal services. Without an Afghan Adjustment Act, Afghan evacuees remain in legal limbo. We have an obligation to help them become permanent residents and to do all we can to reunite them with their families.

The Vermont Asylum Assistance Project's mission is to act as a resource for recruiting, training, and supporting a network of pro bono immigration attorneys, and is modeled on successful projects of the same kind in other states in our region. It will enable Vermont to fully welcome our immigrant neighbors and I encourage you to give this project every support and consideration. I'm also resharing the letter I sent to your office on February 16th regarding an Afghan Adjustment Act.

Sincerely,

Molly R. Gray

Molly Gray

Vermont Lieutenant Governor