

Dear Committee,

I am writing in strong opposition to HB1706. There are three categories of reasons that I strongly oppose this bill.

Principles

The federal refugee resettlement program has been recognized as important for 45 years, and this administration's rebuke of it should be considered a highly unusual blip, not a road map for the future. Additionally, immigration has played a strongly positive role in this history of our country. Immigrants have been contributing to infrastructure and played a notoriously strong role in American exceptionalism via hard work, creativity, and entrepreneurship. From Olympic athletes representing America to some of our most impactful companies, immigrants and children of immigrants have been deeply integrated with our success as a country. For NH to shut off its involvement in the program would be disrespectful to America's history.

Financial

Removing a federally funded office and removing the ability for state agencies to accept grants related to refugee support does not make sense financially. This bill serves only to subtract value from NH to serve the anti-immigrant slant of the *current* federal government. But this vitriolic version of the federal government is unlikely to persist and NH should not make a long term decision to be unable to accept federal funds based on a short term departure from the norm.

Additionally, refugees are already in NH. Without access to federal funds and without an office that is federally funded and has specific competence to help them to integrate into the community, it is likely that they will become a more expensive burden to the State of NH.

Personal

I volunteer as an English as a Second Language tutor through Overcomers Refugee Services (ORS). This organization's mission is to support the integration into the community of legal, vetted refugees during their first 5 years in the US. The people I have met in this line of volunteering have often gone through trauma unimaginable to me but still are motivated to learn English, become a citizen, and work for their living. But having often just come from a refugee camp, they are in an especially vulnerable time of their lives. I have seen firsthand how much strategic intervention during the first few years of their relocation can change the trajectory of someone's life. And therefore change the trajectory of how much someone can be a contributing member of a community. Just as in medicine, early intervention is the most efficient intervention. That is just a sliver of what is at stake with this bill.

A common and reasonable refrain from those wary of immigration is "They can come but they should learn English because they are in America." Well that is what I help them to do. And that is what I've seen them to *want* to do. ORS relies on federal grant money to supplement charitable donations, and without them I would not have the supporting infrastructure to volunteer my time to this cause.

In conclusion, the NH I want to live in is a state that recognizes financially sustainable opportunities to celebrate the social, cultural, ethical, and even practical contributions that even the most vulnerable among us can make in our communities.