



MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 27th, 2024

Poppy Sias-Hernandez
Executive Director, Office of Global Michigan
105 W. Allegan St.
Lansing, MI 48933

Director Sias-Hernandez,

We are writing to you with concerns regarding the Newcomer Rental Subsidy program facilitated by the Office of Global Michigan. As you know, oversight of state agencies is a critical function of the state Legislature, and information from your office would help us perform our oversight role and safeguard taxpayer dollars.

Specifically, we have concerns about the eligibility criteria for the Newcomer Rental Subsidy program and whether the state is distributing grants to help pay the rent of individuals who are facing removal proceedings for being in the country illegally.

As part of our oversight responsibilities, we are seeking a detailed breakdown of the recipients of the Newcomer Rental Subsidy, with a specific emphasis on individuals with pending defensive applications for asylum — that is, people who waited to make an asylum claim until after they were found in the country illegally and faced removal proceedings. Resources are finite and must be allocated judiciously to ensure the program is available to the refugees and others for whom it is intended, and it is crucial that the program aligns with its intended goals and prioritizes those who have gone through the process correctly and are not facing imminent removal from the United States. We are concerned that support for those vulnerable populations may be at risk because of the increasing number of people who are coming into the state illegally and drawing from these funds.

We also have concerns about the program's eligibility and employment criteria, which supposedly require a recipient to work full time or be enrolled in an employment readiness or placement program. However, according to guidance on the Global Michigan website, an enrollee may opt out of the requirement by citing short-term or long-term incapacity. Definitions of incapacity and disability are inconsistent between state agencies and state law, meaning this simple exemption is broad and could easily be exploited if not strongly defined.

Another potential glaring flaw to the program is the provision that allows an enrollee to forgo the income verification requirement by submitting a written explanation of why there is no documentation of income. More troubling is the specific example that the document provides, an assertion that receiving "cash payments" is a valid reason for not providing documentation. On its face, this appears to be a wide-open door for people who are in the country illegally completely bypassing the verification to access the limited funds.

In light of those concerns, we kindly request the following information:

- The total number of recipients under the Newcomer Rental Subsidy program.
- A comprehensive breakdown of recipients based on their status as refugees, asylees, individuals with pending defensive asylum applications, or other classification of immigrant.
- Any established criteria or guidelines used in the prioritization of recipients, particularly those with pending defensive asylum applications.
- The number of recipients who have been provided a waiver from enrollment in an employment program and the applicable definition being used to grant short-term or long-term incapacity.
- The number of recipients who have submitted a written explanation of why there is no documentation of their income.

This information will aid us in assessing the program's effectiveness and ensure that the allocation of resources aligns with the intended purpose of assisting eligible refugees and asylees in our communities. This information will contribute to the effectiveness of the Newcomer Rental Subsidy program and foster greater public trust.

Thank you for your time and attention to this oversight inquiry. We appreciate your dedication to transparency and accountability, and we look forward to your prompt response.

Respectfully,



Republican Leader Matt Hall
42nd District



Representative Joseph A. Aragona
60th District