

January 26, 2023

Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development committee:

My name is Megan Carranza. I am a resident of Bismarck. I testify in support of Senate Bill 2151 to create a state Office of Immigration and an Immigration Workforce Advisory Board. I ask that you give this bill a Do Pass recommendation.

This bill will assist with North Dakota's workforce shortage in the short- and long-term because it incentivizes investing in our communities and rewards long-term settlement here.

My hometown—Crosby, ND—provides an example of how immigrant workforce has invigorated a small, some may say remote, town. Crosby's population is about 1000 people now and the nearest Target store is a two-hour drive away.

Since 2021, Crosby's 81-bed nursing home sits vacant. Staff shortages and high costs of paying traveling professionals contributed to the nursing home's closure. But now, Crosby's joint hospital and clinic employ at least seven immigrants who reliably fill full-time medical care positions. Two serve as registered nurses, one works in housekeeping, and Crosby's lab is fully staffed by four professionals from the Philippines. In addition, the school district employs a speech pathologist and math teacher from the Philippines. All of these individuals are more than employees—they also enrich the community through talents and contributions like coaching singing, raising families, joining churches, and making friendships.

Offering immigrants and refugees incentives to put down roots in North Dakota is good for the state and its newcomers' contributions. Often underemployed in terms of education and experience, this bill proposes a hand up to worthy homebuyers and entrepreneurs. All will gain from the return on this investment.

Immigrants, refugees, and their families have so positively impacted my life and communities that I recently took out my own \$100,000 loan to obtain a law degree to become an immigration lawyer. I believe encouraging migration into North Dakota is mutually beneficial now and well into our future. Let's keep open medical labs like Crosby's and fill positions across the state for the long-term.

Please give Senate Bill 2151 a Do Pass recommendation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully Submitted,

Megan Carranza, J.D.