



Joint Fiscal Committee

Nov. 13, 2025



“Community Partners Experiencing Federal Revenue Loss or Impacts from Shutdown”





1. Update on federal law and guidance on SNAP termination for asylees/refugees/SIVs.



2. Impact of SNAP termination



3. Recommendations from refugee organizations (USCRI/ECDC/VAA)



Joint Fiscal Committee

Nov. 13, 2025

*Testimony of Molly Gray, Executive
Director, VT Afghan Alliance*



Afghan Community in Vermont



- More than **650 Afghan** allies resettled in Vermont today (refugees, asylees and SIV holders)
- Largest per-capita population of Afghan allies in the U.S.
- Between 2019 and 2023, Afghan arrivals contributed more than **\$1.97 billion** in local, state and federal taxes (far more than received in benefits).
- Both individuals and families
- Multiple organizations engaged in resettlement efforts



Vermont Afghan Alliance





Afghan allies continue to arrive Vermont



15 arrivals since March 2025 to northern Vermont

25 arrivals expected between November 1 and August 31, 2026



An estimated 2/3rds of arrivals since 2021 are SIV holders, and 1/3 are men on their own still awaiting arrival of a wife and children.



Changes to U.S. refugee policy & policy on Afghanistan





H.R. 1 - One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)

- Amends **ONLY** the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, no other legislation.

SEC. 10108. ALIEN SNAP ELIGIBILITY.

Section 6(f) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(f)) is amended to read as follows:

“(f) No individual who is a member of a household otherwise eligible to participate in the supplemental nutrition assistance program under this section shall be eligible to participate in the supplemental nutrition assistance program as a member of that or any other household unless he or she is—

“(1) a resident of the United States; and

“(2) either—

“(A) a citizen or national of the United States;

“(B) an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence as an immigrant as defined by sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(20) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, excluding, among others, alien visitors, tourists, diplomats, and students who enter the United States temporarily with no intention of abandoning their residence in a foreign country;

“(C) an alien who has been granted the status of Cuban and Haitian entrant, as defined in section 501(c) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980 (Public Law 96–422); or

“(D) an individual who lawfully resides in the United States in accordance with a Compact of Free Association referred to in section 402(b)(2)(G) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

The income (less, at State option, a pro rata share) and financial resources of the individual rendered ineligible to participate in the supplemental nutrition assistance program under this subsection shall be considered in determining the eligibility and the value of the allotment of the household of which such individual is a member.”



Who is a refugee or asylee and when do they become a legal permanent resident?

- **Refugee**
 - Someone outside their country of nationality, with a well-founded fear of persecution
 - Becomes eligible to become a **legal permanent resident after being physically present in the U.S. for 1-year.**
 - **Asylee**
 - Someone outside their country of origin, with a well-founded fear of persecution
 - Becomes eligible to become a **legal permanent resident, 1-year after a grant of asylum.**
-



Who is a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holder?

- Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009
- An Afghan (or Iraqi) national employed by/or on behalf of the U.S. Government in Afghanistan (or Iraq).
- Eligible for “resettlement assistance, entitlement programs, and other benefits **eligible to refugees.**”
- An SIV holder **becomes a legal permanent resident upon entering a point of entry in the U.S.** The “green card” is mailed to the home.



H.R. 1 - One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)

- Refugees and asylees who have not “adjusted” to legal permanent residence status lose SNAP.
- Refugees, asylee and SIV holders who have legal permanent residence status **SHOULD NOT** lose SNAP.

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The income (less, at State option, a pro rata share) and financial resources of the individual rendered ineligible to participate in the supplemental nutrition assistance program under this subsection shall be considered in determining the eligibility and the value of the allotment of the household of which such individual is a member.”



“The state of Vermont has exempted some green card holders (former asylees and refugees) from the cancellation of SNAP while they await further guidance but did not feel they had the legal backing to exempt the SIV holders...”

- September 23, 2025 notice to organizations from the Vermont State Refugee Office



Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 (PRWORA)

- Established a 5-year waiting period for **legal permanent residents** to receive certain benefits including SNAP, but exempted certain “qualified aliens” including:
 - Refugees (*and SIV holders per 2009 act of Congress)
 - Asylees
 - And other humanitarian entrants



2011 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) guidance

- Clarified that Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants **do not** have to meet the 5-year residency requirement under PRWORA.
- Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 made Afghan SIV holders eligible for the same “resettlement assistance, entitlement programs, and other benefits **available to refugees.**”



October 31, 2025 USDA Guidance

- More contradictory than clarifying.
- States that PRWORA exemptions still exist
- Confirms that Afghan SIV holders have historically been treated like refugees
- Yet seems to suggest that SIV holders are not exempt from the 5-year waiting period under PRWORA (even though refugees who adjust to LPR status keep SNAP)



Takeaways:

- Vermont preemptively ended SNAP for Afghan SIV holders on October 1 and possibly in contradiction of HR1, PRWORA and the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009.
- At least two national immigration organizations (Protecting Immigrant Families and the National Immigration Law Center) have explained how Vermont's analysis is incorrect. **See Memo.**
- Vermont was "first in the nation" to remove Afghan SIV holders from SNAP, with other states taking a different approach: MA, NJ, CT, IA, NY, UT, MD, LA, CO, AZ, WV.
- The Trump Administration specifically exempted Afghan SIV holders from travel bans, continues to process SIV applications, and re-started it's contract with IOM in Pakistan.



Care for all Vermonters

“It’s our obligation at this point as states to do what we can for the people we serve,” Gov. Phil Scott said after the meeting.
“This is a basic benefit that many, many Vermonters rely on.”

By Theo Wells-Spackman

October 29, 2025, 3:49 pm

Publicly clarify State’s position as well as unequivocal support for the contributions of SIV holders, refugees and asylees, as Vermonters, to Vermont’s workforce, tax base, economy and communities.



Thank you





THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL REVENUE LOSS OR IMPACTS FROM SHUTDOWN ON REFUGEES

Presented by: Joe Wiah, Executive Director, ECDC VT

Date: 11/12, 2025



Background

- **Refugee Resettlement Partnership**
- The Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration partners with 10 domestic resettlement agencies nationwide. The Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC) is one of the 10 nationwide.
- **Our Mission**
- ECDC supports refugees and immigrants in achieving dignity, self-sufficiency, and successful community integration.
- **Local Impact**
- As Vermont branch of ECDC, we have resettled over 500 refugees in southern Vermont (Brattleboro, Bennington, and Springfield) since our establishment in 2021.



Goal of Resettlement programs

The goal of the resettlement process is **self-sufficiency** as quickly as possible, preferably within 90 days.

Another goal is for refugees to be fully integrated and contributing members of their new communities.

Our focus during first 90 days is: finding housing, finding jobs, signing refugees up for SNAP, Medicaid, enrolling children into schools, ELL, cultural orientation, showing them how to use public transport systems if there is one etc. Post 90 days, we evaluate each case, enroll those needing more help into specific long-term programs such as RSS, PC-ICM, PC gaps services, RHP, REA etc. Others, we refer them to existing community programs.

We currently serving 270 New Americans in these programs. Each program goal is self- sufficiency.



Year to date arrivals

- Total arrival this year is 206. Those who made Southern Vermont permeant home is **121**.
- **Breakdown:**
- **76 refugees** (45 in Brattleboro and 31 in Bennington) representing 29 households.
- **85** refugees' students who have move to various colleges across the country.
- **45** Special Immigrant visa **holders** (16 Springfield, 6 Wilder, 11 Brattleboro and 12 in Bennington). These are refugees who worked with the US Govt including the US military in Afghanistan.
- **Current Nationalities:** Afghanistan, Eritrea, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Yemen, Guatemala, Nigeria, El Salvador, Iraq, Syria, Honduras, Venezuela, Colombia, and Ukraine.



Revenue Loss

- ECDCVT faces a nearly **\$640,000** shortfall for FY 26, representing approximately **33%** of our budget.
- The critical \$1,650 per-person federal allocation for the first 90 days of refugee resettlement is taking an average of two months to get approved for Special Immigrant Visa holders who arrived through alternative means.
- State refugee office and private funding, which previously represented 30% of annual budget, has now become the major funding source for FY 26.
- There is uncertainty of receiving post-90-day program funding from the federal government this year, which typically supports refugees on a case-by-case basis for up to four years.
- ECDCVT lost 14 staff members in Bennington and Brattleboro with potential for further cuts by year's end.
- As a result, we suspended critical programs including housing search, volunteer coordination, community engagement, transitional housing, financial literacy, legal support, and intensive health care services etc.

The Impact of Snap Benefit Termination on Refugees



- The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) terminated SNAP benefits for all refugees and Special Immigrant Visa holders arriving since October affecting 166 individuals (121 refugees plus 45 SIVs) who arrived this year.
- If the 5-year Green Card eligibility requirement takes effect, over 500 refugees, asylum seekers, and SIVs (excluding children under 18) already resettled in Southern Vermont will lose SNAP eligibility.
- Our records indicate that the 166 individuals approximately 55 are the most vulnerable households. This does not include the 50 additional individuals (about 20 households) already federally approved and expected to arrive this year..
- Between Nov 10 to the 20th, we will be welcoming 3 families (9 individuals) who are not eligible.

The Snap Benefit Termination impact Cont.

- With limited local support options from Foodbanks who are also operating on limited budget, families mentioned are facing immediate food insecurity.
- Groundworks food bank in Brattleboro is biweekly access only
- Carrying Me Home in Brattleboro is twice weekly access
- **While we are grateful** these resources are in our communities, they differ significantly from preferred food options and lack comprehensive access to culturally appropriate items for refugees.
- I must also mentioned that we are so grateful to the Governor and his administration particularly Tracy Dolan for providing emergency food assistance for the most vulnerable refugee population. From our estimate, this assistance will only last for 3 months and benefit those who were approved for Snap assistance prior to Oct. All refugees and SIVs who arrived after October, are not eligible.



Request for this committee

- 1. If possible we ask the State to allocate at least **\$300,000** in funding for ECDCVT to maintain critical needed services for refugees.
- 2. If possible, we ask the State to also re-enroll those who were removed from SNAP, in October and to fund SNAP for this group using State dollars.
- 2. If this is not feasible, the State considers establishing a separate state-administered program that is the same as SNAP for those who were removed from SNAP.
- 3. As a third option, the State funds refugee organizations to provide the benefit directly to those removed from SNAP, at the same level and using the same criteria as SNAP.



Impact Cont.

I close with the Story of NP

THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL FUNDING LOSS, FEDERAL SNAP RULE CHANGES, AND THE FEDERAL SHUTDOWN ON VERMONT'S REFUGEE POPULATION

“...An immigrant leaves his homeland because the grass is greener; a refugee leaves his homeland because the grass is burning under his feet.”

Law, B., & Eckes, M. (2010). More than just surviving handbook: ELL for every classroom teacher (3rd ed.). Winnipeg, MB: Portage & Main Press. Page 86

Sonali Samarasinghe
Field Office Director, USCRI Vermont
November 13, 2025



SNAP CLOSURE NOTICE (REDACTED) FOR REFUGEE FAMILY OF 10



Department for Children and Families
Economic Services Division

APPLICATION/DOCUMENT PROCESSING CTR
280 STATE DRIVE
WATERBURY VT 05671-1500

Questions? Call ESD Benefit Service
Center at 800-479-6151

IMPORTANT:
Information about your right to
appeal this action and your rights
under the Americans with Disabilities
Act is on the back of this notice.

Notice of Decision

3SquaresVT

Your 3SquaresVT application was denied for the month of October, 2025 because:

- There are no eligible people in the home. (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 7, Part 273 (7 C.F.R. 273.1(b)(7))), United States Code, Title 7, Chapter 51, Section 2015 (7 U.S.C. § 2015)

You owe \$ 36.00 on your 3SquaresVT overpayment, please continue to make monthly payments. (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 7, Part 273 (7 C.F.R. 273.8(a)(4)))

Make your check or money order payable to "DOF A/R" and mail it to:
DOF Business Office
Accounts Receivable - Building A
103 S Main St.
Waterbury, VT 05671-1201

These people are not eligible for benefits for October, 2025:

- does not meet eligibility requirements for legal immigrants. United States code, Title 7, Chapter 51, Section 2015 (7 U.S.C. § 2015 (f))
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Case XXX-XX-

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This notice is based on facts for October, 2025.

To find out more about Agency of Human Services programs, visit our website:

www.screendoor.vermont.gov

To find out about services in your community, visit www.vermont211.org, or dial 211 on your phone.

Getting 3SquaresVT Qualifies You For Lifeline

If you get 3Squares VT, you qualify for Lifeline - a federal program that provides a monthly discount on phone or internet service. One benefit is allowed per household: either phone (wireless or landline) or internet service (home or mobile data).

To learn more, call 1-800-234-9473 where you will learn how to contact your provider and how to enroll. If you're age 60 or older, you can also call the Senior Helpline at 1-800-642-5119.

If you applied for other programs, not included in this notice, you will be receiving a separate notice about your eligibility for those programs.

You can access free ASL interpretive services by scheduling an appointment. To do so, please call 7-1-1 for TTY/RELAY assistance, or visit your local Economic Service Division office. For healthcare related questions, you can call 7-1-1 for free ASL interpretive services. Appointments for healthcare questions cannot be scheduled at the Economic Service Division office.
By: Economic Services Division (SA3)

Duplicate Copy

Case XXX-XX-

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USCRI VT REFUGEES & SIVS ARRIVING DURING PREVIOUS 5 YEARS

(Those highlighted in red theoretically are no longer eligible for SNAP due to the rule change for non-citizens. While many small-sized families might have exceeded income limits for SNAP, larger families would be unlikely to do so.)

Resettled...	# Households	# Individuals	# Adults	# Minors
Up to 1 year ago (only eligible to <i>apply</i> for green card at 1 year)	33	79	49	30
1 up to 2 years ago (applied but <i>waiting</i> for green card approval)	98	272	154	118
2 up to 5 years ago (likely to <i>have</i> green card)	124	337	208	247
Total (0-5 years ago)	255	688	411	277

LIVING WAGE VS. REALITY

According to the Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office, in its 2024 Vermont Basic Needs Budgets and Livable Wage Report, to cover a *Basic Needs Budget*, the following wages are needed...

Family type	Urban	Rural
Single Person	\$23.98	\$21.32
Single Person, Shared Housing	\$19.53	\$17.68
Single Parent, One Child	\$35.80	\$29.87
Single Parent, Two Children	\$43.06	\$36.91
Two Adults, No Children	\$17.81	\$17.01
Two Adults, Two Children (one wage earner)	\$44.24	\$41.03
Two Adults, Two Children (two wage earners)	\$25.08	\$23.48

https://ljo.vermont.gov/assets/Publications/Basic-Needs-Budget/GENERAL-379098-v2-2025_Basic_Needs_Budget_Report.pdf

Most refugees we serve earn between **\$17-22/hour**. The math simply doesn't work. Even with two full-time earners, refugee families with more than two children struggle to meet basic needs.

USCRI VT CLIENT HOUSEHOLD BUDGETS

Monthly Budget Family Composition	<u>FAMILY A</u> 4 members 1 (single parent) 3 (ages 8, 16, now 18)	<u>FAMILY B</u> 5 members 2 (1 caring for baby) 3 (ages 6 months, 5, 7)	<u>FAMILY C</u> 7 members 2 (1 caring for baby) 5 (6 months, 2, 5, 8, 12)	<u>FAMILY D</u> 10 members 5 (2 parents, 3 adult children) 5 (ages 5, 9, 11, 13, 15)
Adults				
Minors				
<u>INCOME & ASSISTANCE</u>				
Job 1	\$2,940.00	\$3,120.00	\$3,520.00	\$3,100.00
Job 2	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,400.00
Job 3	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,250.00
SNAP	\$300.00	\$450.00	\$700.00	\$0.00
TOTAL INCOME & ASSISTANCE	\$3,240.00	\$3,570.00	\$4,220.00	\$8,750.00
<u>EXPENSES</u>				
Rent	\$1,000.00	\$1,995.00	\$1,600.00	\$4,000.00
Rent as % of empl income	34%	64%	45%	46%
Housing Type	BHA housing	Market Rate	Section 8 Voucher	Market Rate
Heating	\$120.00	\$125.00	\$150.00	\$175.00
Electric	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$150.00	\$175.00
Water/Sewer	\$21.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Phone	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$75.00
Internet	\$15.00	\$15.00	\$15.00	\$15.00
Bus Passes	\$50.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$250.00
IOM Travel Loan	\$140.00	\$140.00	\$210.00	\$280.00
Food	\$750.00	\$800.00	\$900.00	\$1,900.00
Other (clothing, laundry, toiletries, etc.)	\$150.00	\$150.00	\$150.00	\$300.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,401.00	\$3,480.00	\$3,305.00	\$7,170.00
BALANCE	\$839.00	\$90.00	\$915.00	\$1,580.00
BALANCE w/o SNAP	\$539.00	-\$360.00	\$215.00	\$1,580.00
	Without BHA housing (about \$900 less/month than market rate), balance would be negative	Household needs a second job or housing voucher	Without housing voucher, balance would be negative	If family only had two incomes, then would not be able to cover expenses, even with SNAP

USCRI VT CLIENT HOUSEHOLD BUDGETS

Monthly Budget

Family Composition

	<u>FAMILY A</u>	<u>FAMILY B</u>	<u>FAMILY C</u>	<u>FAMILY D</u>
Adults	4 members 1 (single parent)	5 members 2 (1 caring for baby)	7 members 2 (1 caring for baby)	10 members 5 (2 parents, 3 adult children)
Minors	3 (ages 8, 16, now 18)	3 (ages 6 months, 5, 7)	5 (6 months, 2, 5, 8, 12)	5 (ages 5, 9, 11, 13, 15)

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Without housing voucher, balance would be negative

If family only had two incomes, then would not be able to cover expenses, even with SNAP

Notes

COMPARISON BASED UPON ACTUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME & ESTIMATED BUDGETS

It is important to support parents with young children, who are our State's future

Many 18+ year-olds are full-time high school students that work part-time

Many mothers would like to work, but it is difficult to find childcare

Having 3 FT incomes, including from adult children, is needed for many large families
Case of 10 is likely above income limits for SNAP

Rent is the most significant contributor to the cost burdens families face

Discounted Internet Essentials program rate
Covers bus passes but not car payments, insurance, gas, repairs
Monthly payment based upon family size

SNAP is what keeps most families' finances in the black

Without SNAP, more and more families will be struggling to pay for the basics unless there is a commensurate increase in other forms of assistance (housing vouchers, LIHEAP, etc.) If more childcare was available (e.g. Head Start), that would encourage parents of children below school age to begin working.

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE NEW VERMONTERS IMPACTED

- USCRI Vermont, ECDC, and its partners such as VAA have identified 46 highly vulnerable households, most of whom arrived in Vermont within the last 15 months, that abruptly lost all or a portion of their SNAP benefits in October. From these households alone, 150 individuals lost SNAP benefits.
- Each of our organizations is raising funds to support these and other families but will not be able to make up for SNAP funds lost.
- Of these 150 individuals that lost benefits, approximately 30 individuals are Afghan SIVs, from 16 different families.
- Among the impacted Afghans are:
 - A widow with 5 children, whose husband was killed by the Taliban. She has worked full-time for several years, learned to drive, and now owns a car; but unfortunately, her hours were recently reduced at work.
 - An expecting mother who arrived in the U.S. two months ago and whose husband is working hard to secure his first job.
 - A recently arrived widow with health problems whose daughter is thrilled to attend high school, returning to school after several years of interruption.
 - An elderly woman who had risen to join Afghanistan's cohort of female judges and had to flee without any family to accompany her after the fall of Kabul.

Amid the ongoing government shutdown, even those households who retained eligibility are now unable to access the SNAP benefits that they rely upon. The action from the Governor and Legislature to provide State-funded SNAP benefits is very much appreciated. **Vermont has the power to restore dignity and stability to these families. Let us not allow technicalities to become tragedies. Thank you.**



Please reach out with any questions:

- Director: Sonali Samarasinghe, Director ssamarasinghe@refugees.org
- Refugee Services: Matt Thompson, mthompson@refugees.org
- Education: Haley Muth kmuth@refugees.org
- Health & Wellness: Michele Denault mdenault@refugees.org
- Community Integration: Viktoriia Lutsenko vlutsenko@refugees.org
- Language Access: Ramiza Peco requestinterpretvrt@uscrimail.org
- Rutland Office: Mandy Rigler mrigler@refugees.org





USCRI, ECDC, VAA Recommendations:

1. Vermont should re-enroll those households who were removed from SNAP and fund SNAP with State dollars.
2. Alternatively, Vermont should establish a separate state-administered program.
3. Alternatively, Vermont should fund refugee organizations to administer a SNAP-like benefit to those removed from SNAP.