



Lutheran Social Service
for changing lives

TO: Special Master, the Honorable Kathleen Blatz

FROM: Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS)

Designated Speaker, Kim Dettmer, Director of Refugee Services

Witness, Inyene Ekah, Senior Program Manager of Employment Services

Witness, Kirsten Anderson-Stembridge, Director of Advocacy and Volunteer Services

RE: Refugee services through the Refugee Program Office at DHS, MFIP Employment Services and additional Youth and Housing Funding

DATE: Thursday, July 7, 2011

Refugee Services

LSS supports the Dayton Administration's position that refugee resettlement programs receive continued funding through the shutdown. The refugee resettlement programs listed below are fully funded by the federal government through the Minnesota DHS Refugee Program Office. We believe that because these programs are important to the health, welfare and safety of refugees, and because they are fully funded by the federal government, they should continue to receive funding based on page 7 #24 of Judge Gearin's June 29, 2011 ruling, the Supremacy clause.

Refugee Employment Services

The Office of Refugee Resettlement within the U.S. Department of State allocates funds based on the number of refugees resettled in the state three years prior to the current fiscal year. These funds allow refugees to gain rapid employment for self-sufficiency. As with Refugee Cash Assistance, Refugee Employment Services is especially designed to support single or childless refugees for their first eight months in the U.S. This support is critical to refugees who face numerous barriers to self-sufficiency. If refugees do not gain employment during this short time, they will likely maintain reliance on Medical Assistance and seek direct support through cash assistance and food support.

Refugee Social Services

The Office of Refugee Resettlement within the U.S. Department of State provides funding for social services through an allocation based on the number of refugees resettled in the state three years prior to the current fiscal year. These funds support refugees to find long-term safe housing, connect within their community for needed resources such as translation, accessing appropriate health care, learning essential language skills, connecting children with appropriate schools and beginning the immigration process. If refugees cannot accomplish these things within the first months of arrival they are at high risk for taking much longer to achieve health, wellbeing and self-sufficiency.

Refugee Elder Services

The Office of Refugee Resettlement within the U.S. Department of State distributes these discretionary grant funds to support the most isolated refugees, elderly refugees who face high risk of mental health issues. Many elder refugees are homebound due to the fact that their children are working and grandchildren are attending school. Losing their traditional role as head

of household, refugee elders often experience depression and isolation. Through these federal funds, refugee elders receive assistance in their adjustment to the U.S., including an opportunity to learn English and prepare for U.S. citizenship.

Refugee Youth Services

The U.S. Department of Education distributes these discretionary grant funds for refugee youth to support academic achievement. Many adult refugees have never received formal education. Their children come to the U.S. with limited education and literacy. Refugee youth are at great risk of dropping out, needing long-term supports and developing adverse coping skills. Refugee youth already experience significant challenges in their new country, without these funds students could face even more significant setbacks in their education leading to longer term negative impacts on families, communities and the social service system.

MFIP and Employment Services

LSS supports the position of the Consolidated Fund Petitioners who testified July 1, 2011 and Governor Dayton's recommendations that Employment Services under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/Minnesota Family Investment Program Consolidated Fund continue as critical core functions of government. MFIP benefits have already been deemed a core function of government and will continue through the shutdown. MFIP participants are required to meet work participation hours. Judge Gearin's ruling on page 7 #25, cites TANF as an example of federal funding to continue. LSS Employment Services work with MFIP participants to meet work participation hours. One activity used by MFIP participants at LSS to meet their hourly requirement is Supported Work. Supported Work is a subsidized or unsubsidized work experience placement with a public or private sector employer. We request that Employment Services be funded through the shutdown so participants may continue to work and receive benefits.

Additional Youth and Housing Services (follow up from testimony July 5, 2011)

Three additional federal funds have been brought to our attention since the LSS testimony on housing services provided July 5, 2011. **The following are fully funded by the federal government and meet the health, welfare and safety of Minnesotans and should continue as core functions of government under Judge Gearin's ruling on page 7 #24 the Supremacy clause:**

Projects in Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) is funded by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and distributed by the Adult Mental Health Division of DHS. PATH provides critical services to vulnerable adults with mental illness who are homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness.

Educational and Training Voucher Program (ETV) is funded by federal grant funds and distributed through the Child Safety and Permanency Division of DHS. Youth who have been in foster care rely heavily on the ETV program for financial assistance to pursue secondary education.

Children's Trust Fund is funded by the federal Community Based Child Abuse Prevention grant and distributed through the Child Safety and Permanency Division of DHS. These funds carry out child abuse and neglect prevention efforts, including mental health counseling and support for children experiencing long-term homelessness.