

February 2, 2021

RE: HF 321 Certifications for Victims of Crimes

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and members of the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee:

I, Nysha Operana, Attorney at Paschal Nwokocha & Chukwu Law Office, support the proposed bill and respectfully request that members of this committee support efforts to prevent the victimization of Minnesota residents especially in Greater Minnesota.

The U visa certification process has been used as a crime fighting tool by law enforcement throughout the country. It is an invaluable vehicle to work closely with victims to prevent crime, save lives, and hold violent offenders accountable. Congress sought not only to prosecute perpetrators of crimes committed against immigrants, but to also strengthen relations between law enforcement and immigrant communities. I want law enforcement in my community to pursue and punish wrong doers while protecting victims. Passing HF 321 is the only way to ensure that all residents of Minnesota are being protected.

The majority of clients I work with are victims of domestic violence and sadly, children who are victims of sexual abuse and physical abuse. Unfortunately, the disparity between each city and how they handle U visa certifications has had an impact on many of the victims I have worked with. I once worked for a child victim of sexual assault, who was at risk of deportation, however, we were unable to obtain a Certification merely because the sheriff did not believe he had authority to sign. Whereas, I worked with a victim of domestic violence, who was detained by ICE, and I was able to obtain a signed Certification through a different city within 24 hours. I believe that anyone who has been victimized while in Minnesota should receive the same treatment regardless of where the crime occurred. Obtaining a certification is not an easy process in many areas of the state. Law enforcement can refuse to fill out the certification for any reason. This bill will help all victims of crime equitably across the state to utilize this process and will improve relations between the immigrant community and law enforcement.

Thank you for your consideration and your support.

Sincerely,



Nysha Operana