

Refugee Council USA

June 30, 2017

Dear Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives:

Refugee Council USA (RCUSA), a coalition dedicated to refugee protection, welcome and excellence in the U.S. refugee resettlement program, representing the interests of hundreds of thousands of refugees and their millions of supporters across the country, urges all Members of Congress to affirm the importance of refugee protection and resettlement and to continue a robust and compassionate U.S. refugee resettlement program.

We call on members of Congress to:

- Support a presidential determination of at least 75,000 refugees in FY 18,
- Provide stable funding for refugee protection and resettlement,
- And ensure that the refugee resettlement program reflects the diversity of background that defines us as Americans.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) has been a critical humanitarian, diplomacy and national security tool for over three decades. As we face the worst displacement crisis in global history with more than 65 million displaced individuals, including over 22 million refugees, now is not the time to stop, or shrink, the program.

Refugee resettlement is a longstanding tradition that provides safety to people fleeing persecution. It is a last resort, available to less than one percent of the world's refugees, and is critical to U.S. diplomatic efforts to encourage other countries to keep their doors open, allow refugees to work, and permit refugee children to attend school. The United States must continue to welcome refugees through resettlement, while also supporting ally countries that are hosting millions of refugees. This support is essential for diplomatic and national security purposes. We must continue to do both.

Many have, understandably so, expressed national security concerns about all immigration programs, including refugee resettlement. We appreciate those concerns. However, the fact is that the USRAP is a national security program. National security experts, including Henry Kissinger, David Petraeus, Michael Hayden, Brent Scowcroft, Steven Hadley, George Schultz, Michael Chertoff, Generals James Jones, George Casey, Richard Myers, James Stavridis, John Vessey and others recently wrote Congress that *“resettlement initiatives help advance U.S. national security interests by supporting the stability of our allies and partners that are struggling to host large numbers of refugees.”*

Furthermore, the refugee vetting process includes more than 20 steps and is conducted while refugees are still overseas by eight different U.S. Federal Government Agencies using six different security data bases, five separate background checks, four biometric security checks, three separate in-person interviews, and two interagency security checks. All of this vetting can take up to two years to complete. Nobody wants the USRAP to be safe and secure more than the refugee resettlement community, so we support the practice every previous Administration, both Republican and Democrat, have adhered to: consistently evaluating the program's security while simultaneously safely admitting refugees.

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Members:

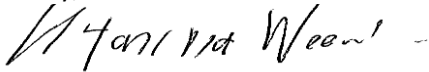
Amnesty International USA
Asylum Access
Boat People SOS
Center for Applied Linguistics
Center for Migration Studies
Center for Victims of Torture
Church World Service/
Immigration & Refugee
Program
Episcopal Migration Ministries
Ethiopian Community
Development Council
HIAS
Human Rights First
International Catholic
Migration Commission
International Refugee
Assistance Project
International Rescue
Committee
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Jubilee Campaign USA
Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service
Multifaith Alliance
for Syrian Refugees
Refugee Center Online
RefugePoint
Southeast Asia Resource
Action Center
Upwardly Global
U.S. Conference of Catholic
Bishops/Migration & Refugee
Services
U.S. Committee for Refugees
and Immigrants
World Relief

As one of 28 resettlement countries, the United States implements a public-private partnership model of refugee resettlement, with congregations, schools, employers and local communities intrinsically involved in welcoming refugees and helping them integrate and thrive. The U.S. refugee resettlement program emphasizes early self-sufficiency through employment, and most refugees are employed within their first six months of arriving in the United States.

While most refugees arrive with limited resources, for every dollar spent helping refugees start a new life in the United States, there is significant economic return to communities.¹ Refugees make long-term investments in the United States by founding companies or strengthening the workforce, earning citizenship, and buying homes. A report in Tennessee found that refugees contributed almost twice as much in tax revenues as they consumed in state-funded services in the past two decades.² Another recent study in Columbus, Ohio, showed that from the \$6 million that the federal government and resettlement agencies spend annually to help refugees integrate, refugees contribute an annual \$1.6 billion back into the local economy, including nearly \$36 million in spending.³ Refugees are active members of their communities, fuel the U.S. economy, and exert more than \$56 billion in spending power.

Historically, refugee policy and politics have been bipartisan – even nonpartisan – endeavors. Both political parties have spearheaded efforts to lead on refugee resettlement because it embodies the best of American ideals. RCUSA encourages all Members of Congress to uphold this proud tradition, and in doing so, demonstrate the best of who we are as a country.

Sincerely,



Hans Van de Weerd
Chair, Refugee Council USA

¹ From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America, New American Economy (June 2017), http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/NAE_Refugees_V5.pdf.

² Krista Lee, A Study on the Federal Cost Shifting to the State of Tennessee as a Result of the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program for the Period 1990 through 2012, Nov. 12, 2013, http://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/tn_report_federalcostshifting_refugeeresettlement.pdf.

³ Chmura Economics & Analytics, Economic Impact of Refugees in the Cleveland Area, October 2013, <http://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/clevelandrefugeeeconomic-impact.pdf>.