

Faith Leaders Support Refugee Resettlement in Texas

Dear Governor Abbott and Texas State House and Senate Members,

We write as leaders in national, state, and local faith communities to express our deep disappointment in the plans for the Texas state government to withdraw from administering the U.S. refugee resettlement program, which became effective recently. Likewise, we are strongly concerned about several bills introduced at the state legislature that would place undue burdens on refugee resettlement agencies and the communities they serve.

We are grateful for the more than 22 refugee resettlement offices in Texas. Most of these offices have specific faith roots, and all work consistently with multi-faith partners to ensure effective resettlement and integration into Texas communities. We take seriously our deep call to “welcome the stranger” and to show compassion for vulnerable populations facing persecution.

As diverse faith communities, we have been proud to assist together in the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of refugees around the United States since the end of World War II. Our refugee neighbors have demonstrated faith values of resilience, determination, and hope. These are some of our strongest values as Americans and as Texans. Our relationships with refugee families have enriched our congregational communities, and have helped our members understand and provide healing in the face of many of the deepest conflicts around the world.

Throughout our nation’s history, the public-private partnership of the U.S. refugee resettlement has served as an international model for welcome and an effective way for the vulnerable to find new hope. Additionally, it has helped the comfortable demonstrate welcome across boundaries and practice the virtue of hospitality. We can be both safe and welcoming of refugees. Indeed, in this time when one in every 113 people globally is an asylum seeker, internally displaced, or is a refugee, and where there are more refugees in the world than at any time in recorded history, we must re-double - not turn back from - our life-giving heritage of refugee resettlement.

Therefore, for the above reasons, we call upon you to re-commit your support for and participation in the U.S. resettlement program, and urge you to oppose any anti-refugee proposal. We look forward to continuing to assist with refugee resettlement in Texas. We urgently request you continue to offer welcome to refugees within our great state of Texas.

Sincerely,

National Faith Leaders

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Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister & President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, General Minister & President, United Church of Christ

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Jasmine Bowden, African American Ministers in Action

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Rev. Kevin Mitchell, Highland Park Baptist Church, Austin
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Rev. Michael Mumme, First United Methodist Church of Austin, Austin
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Rev. Karen Thompson, Metropolitan Community Church of Austin, Austin
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Rev. Christina Hockman, Unitarian Universalist Church of Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi
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Rev. Jen Kindsvatter, Celebration Lutheran Church, Cypress
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May Sebel, Temple Emanuel, Dallas
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Rabbi David Stern, Temple Emanu-El, Dallas
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Reverend Doctor Charles Rolen, University Christian Church, Fort Worth
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Rev. Joshua Hale, Mission Bend United Methodist Church, Houston
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Pastor Paul Wembolenga, Christ is the Answer International Church, Houston
Rev. Tommy Williams, Senior Pastor, St Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston
Cindy Wu, Access ECC, Houston
Pastor David Wu, Access Evangelical Covenant Church, Houston
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Pastor Arturo Cadar, CrossRoads UMC, Houston
Rev. Vickey Gibbs, Resurrection MCC, UFMCC, Houston
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Rev. David Weber, First United Methodist Church, Mesquite
Rev. Chris Michaelis, New Hope Lutheran Church, Missouri City
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Rev. Lillian Smith, Canyon Creek Presbyterian Church, Richardson
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Lenna Baxter, Interfaith Welcome Coalition, San Antonio
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