

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As the elected Board of County Commissioners representing Durham County, North Carolina residents, we are sharing this letter to communicate our strong support for resettling refugees in our states and communities, and to also urge your Administration to resettle at least 95,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2020. It is our strong hope that you will seriously consider the voices of communities across this country as we join in support of this life-saving program that brings so much to our collective communities, and to express our Board's desire to help protect refugees in need.

Data indicates that each day, nearly 44,000 people are forcibly displaced from their homes due to violence, persecution, or war. The United Nations Refugee Agency reports that over 68.5 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide, 25.4 million of whom are registered as refugees. More than half of those registered are children. Despite this escalating crisis, last year the United States set its lowest resettlement goal of only 30,000 refugees, and to date, has only resettled 17,276 refugees this fiscal year. Fiscal Year 2019's refugee admissions goal represents the lowest number of refugees the U.S. has resettled in the history of the program and indeed comes at a time of the greatest need. We know we can do so much more.

We are a nation founded and built by immigrants and refugees. It is our shared immigrant narrative that makes our collective states and local communities strong; it is our deep and abiding respect for hard work, our shared commitment to this country we call home, and our belief that America is a beacon of hope, that unite us.

The American people – our constituents – express their support for resettling refugees in our communities every single day. From welcoming a refugee family as they arrive at an airport to assisting them with English language classes or simply helping them navigate the local bus line – our communities stand for welcome and inclusion. Like us, they know that refugees are not people to be feared – they are men, women, and children who were forced to flee in order to save their lives and are now looking for a place to call home again.

Refugees bring immense value to our communities. They have invigorated our economies, brought innovation to our towns, and made our communities stronger through their contributions to our public life and cultural institutions. Refugees in the U.S. are students, business owners, dedicated employees, customers, elected officials, and community leaders – just like us. They are us.

The precipitous decline in refugee arrivals has negatively impacted our local economies, particularly for employers that have traditionally welcomed refugees. Many key U.S. industries – including manufacturing, hospitality, and food production – have become increasingly reliant on refugee workers to fill in gaps left by labor shortages.

Refugees, and their descendants, bring so much to our communities, and we are a stronger and better nation as a result. As elected officials, we encourage you to visit our communities and hear directly from our constituents, including refugees themselves, as to what this life-saving program has brought to our country.

We earnestly hope that you will consider our strong desire to welcome refugees as you make your decision regarding the number of refugees our country will help in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Wendy Jacobs, Chair

Durham Board of County Commissioners