

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

**Statement for the Record
Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations
House Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship
“The Current State of the U.S. Refugee Program”
February 27, 2020**

For the first time since World War II, there are more than 70.8 million displaced people worldwide, including nearly 26 million refugees. As Christians, we are called to respect the dignity and worth of every human being, and to do our part to alleviate the suffering of our displaced brothers and sisters.

The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations works to protect the human rights and safety of refugees by supporting the refugee resettlement work of Episcopal Migration Ministries and advocating for robust refugee resettlement policies. In the last thirty years of our partnership with the federal government, Episcopal Migration Ministries has welcomed more than 95,000 refugees - children, women, and men - to safety and hope in the United States.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is a model humanitarian initiative and a critical tool of U.S. foreign policy. Resettlement is the last resort for refugees who cannot safely return home or remain in the country from which they first fled. Refugees resettled in the United States rebuild their lives in a haven of peace and security. However, resettlement does not just benefit refugees themselves. Through their entrepreneurship, cultural resources, employment, and consumer habits, refugees contribute untold gifts to their local communities and to our nation.

As a church and as strong proponents of religious freedom, we are especially aware that refugee resettlement assists those who are fleeing religious persecution. As statistics show the contraction of conscience rights and religious freedom around the world for a wide variety of groups, the church views resettlement as an essential tool to provide protection to those who have suffered because of their beliefs.

As a faith community rooted in the Gospel of Welcome, The Episcopal Church strongly disapproves of the Trump administration’s decision to substantially reduce the number of refugees admitted to the United States. The church also opposes the administration’s decision to give states and localities the ability to refuse resettlement. Both actions contradict the will of Congress as expressed through the Refugee Act of 1980. As we prepare to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Refugee Act, we urge members of this subcommittee, and all members of Congress, to stand firm in support of a robust refugee resettlement program.

Sincerely,

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