



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

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November 25, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

Mayors across the nation recognize the many contributions refugees make to their cities and to our nation as a whole. They strengthen our economy and enhance our culture. We write to urge the Administration to rescind the September 26 executive order and return this year's refugee admissions to previous annual levels.

For years, the United States has been a world leader in welcoming people who have fled violence and persecution and are seeking a safe place to call home. Since our refugee admissions program was established nearly 40 years ago, most administrations have recognized the global need for resettlement and determined the yearly admissions ceiling in consultation with Congress to fulfill the U.S. commitment. U.S. cities have long benefited from the annual arrival of refugees. Once they are resettled, refugees learn the new language, adjust to the different culture, and strive to establish a new life. In the process, they also enrich and bring cultural vibrancy and diversity to their local communities.

Refugees contribute meaningfully to our economy as earners and taxpayers. While they receive initial assistance upon arriving in the United States, they see significant income increases in subsequent years. Their entrepreneurship rate is greater than that of other immigrants, as are their long-term investments in the country, including founding companies, earning citizenship, and buying homes. Indeed, they have positively reshaped cities across the country in recent decades by opening restaurants, buying vacant homes, contributing to the cultural landscape, and adding to the local workforce.

Contributing to our country most visibly are refugees whose work has garnered national and international attention, including former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and Madeline Albright, singer Gloria Estefan, scientist Albert Einstein, authors Vladimir Nabokov and Isabel Allende, film directors Billy Wilder and Milos Forman, composer Béla Bartok, painter Piet Mondrian, and actor Andy Garcia.

The Executive Order would fundamentally change the structure of the U.S. resettlement program by devolving key decisions primarily to the states and ultimately lead to a patchwork of conflicting policies running contrary to the purpose of a national resettlement program.

It will also leave thousands of refugees, former refugees, and U.S. citizens without consistent and routine access to integration services and other supports. This is an unprecedented and harmful procedure, particularly given that resettlement agencies already consult regularly with state and local stakeholders regarding community needs.

The plan to reduce the number of refugees who may enter the country this fiscal year to 18,000 represents a reduction of approximately 80 percent from the levels of just a few years ago. This harms both the tens of thousands of refugees who have been patiently waiting overseas to work their way through the system and it harms our cities because they won't be able to come to our communities and continue to make the important contributions that those who came before them were able to do.

We hope that you will heed our call. America's cities and our nation will be stronger for it.

Sincerely,

Mayor Bryan K. Barnett
Rochester Hills, MI
President

Mayor Greg Fischer
Louisville, KY
Vice President

Mayor Nan Whaley
Dayton, OH
Second Vice President

Mayor Steve Benjamin
Columbia, SC
Past President

Mayor Elizabeth B. Kautz
Burnsville, MN
Past President

Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director

Mayor John Giles
Mesa, AZ
Co-Chair, Immigration
Reform Task Force

Mayor Jorge O. Elorza
Providence, RI
Co-Chair, Immigration
Reform Task Force

Mayor Eric Garcetti
Los Angeles, CA
Chair, USCM Latino
Alliance

Mayor Kate Gallego
Phoenix, AZ

Mayor Pauline Russo Cutter
San Leandro, CA

Mayor Buddy Dyer
Orlando, FL

Mayor Mark W. Mitchell
Tempe, AZ

Mayor Michael D. Tubbs
Stockton, CA

Mayor Frank C. Ortis
Pembroke Pines, FL

Mayor Jonathan Rothschild
Tucson, AZ

Mayor Patrick J. Furey
Torrance, CA

Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms
Atlanta, GA

Mayor Lioneld Jordan
Fayetteville, AR

Mayor Christopher L. Cabaldon
West Sacramento, CA

Mayor Hardie Davis Jr.
Augusta, GA

Mayor Mary Casillas Salas
Chula Vista, CA

Mayor Michael B. Hancock
Denver, CO

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot
Chicago, IL

Mayor Sam Hindi
Foster City, CA

Mayor Luke Bronin
Hartford, CT

Mayor Nancy Rodkin Rotering
Highland Park, IL

Mayor Lily Mei
Fremont, CA

Mayor Toni N. Harp
New Haven, CT

Mayor Thomas P. McNamara
Rockford, IL

Mayor Alan L. Nagy
Newark, CA

Mayor David Martin
Stamford, CT

Mayor Thomas 'Tom' C. Henry
Fort Wayne, IN

Mayor Thomas K. Butt
Richmond, CA

Mayor Shari Cantor
West Hartford, CT

Mayor LaToya Cantrell
New Orleans, LA

Mayor Sam Liccardo
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Mayor Muriel Bowser
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Mayor Bernard 'Jack' C. Young
Baltimore, MD

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Somerset, MD

Mayor Byron W. Brown
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Mayor James A. Diossa
Central Falls, RI

Mayor Martin J. Walsh
Boston, MA

Mayor Bill de Blasio
New York, NY

Mayor John J. Tecklenburg
Charleston, SC

Mayor Alex B. Morse III
Holyoke, MA

Mayor Paul A. Dyster
Niagara Falls, NY

Mayor Madeline Anne Rogero
Knoxville, TN

Mayor Jon Mitchell
New Bedford, MA

Mayor Lovely A. Warren
Rochester, NY

Mayor Steve Adler
Austin, TX

Mayor Mike Duggan
Detroit, MI

Mayor Lydia Lavelle
Carrboro, NC

Mayor Trey Mendez
Brownsville, TX

Mayor Rosalynn Bliss
Grand Rapids, MI

Mayor Pam Hemminger
Chapel Hill, NC

Mayor Eric Johnson
Dallas, TX

Mayor James B. Hovland
Edina, MN

Mayor Steve Schewel
Durham, NC

Mayor Dee Margo
El Paso, TX

Mayor Jacob Frey
Minneapolis, MN

Mayor Nancy Vaughan
Greensboro, NC

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Houston, TX

Mayor Lyda Krewson
St. Louis, MO

Mayor Dontario 'Don' Hardy
Kinston, NC

Mayor Ron Nirenberg
San Antonio, TX

Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird
Lincoln, NE

Mayor Tim Mahoney
Fargo, ND

Mayor Jackie Biskupski
Salt Lake City, UT

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Henderson, NV

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Lakewood, OH

Mayor Justin Wilson
Alexandria, VA

Mayor Brad J. Cohen
East Brunswick Township, NJ

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Mayor Levar Stoney
Richmond, VA

Mayor Adrian O. Mapp
Plainfield, NJ

Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz
Toledo, OH

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Seattle, WA

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Miyagishima
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Tacoma, WA

Mayor Alan Webber
Santa Fe, NM

Mayor Jim Kenney
Philadelphia, PA

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway
Madison, WI

Mayor William Peduto
Pittsburgh, PA

Mayor Michael Vandersteen
Sheboygan, WI

cc. The White House