

March 15, 2016

Chairman Goodlatte
House Judiciary Committee
2309 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Conyers
House Judiciary Committee
2426 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers:

The undersigned 234 organizations strongly oppose H.R. 4731, the “Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act of 2016.” This proposed legislation would dismantle the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, which has been a critical humanitarian and diplomacy tool for over three decades. With more than 60 million refugees and displaced people around the world, it is critically important that the U.S. demonstrates global leadership by welcoming refugees. Enacting legislation that would send the message that refugees are not welcome here is a sharp departure from our nation’s character as a beacon of freedom and our history as a country founded by refugees and immigrants.

This Act would hinder U.S. foreign policy objectives and undermine humanitarian assistance. It proposes to cap the number of refugees resettled in the U.S. at 60,000 per year, despite the President’s determination that 85,000 should be admitted in Fiscal Year 2016. Importantly, it would take away the President’s authority to set the number of refugees who may enter the country per year.

H.R. 4731 would require the U.S. to prioritize resettlement of religious minorities above all other refugees, including those who fear persecution based on their race, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. It also undermines the integrity of the program, which resettles refugees based on vulnerability, not a hierarchy of human rights.

This Act would allow state and local governments to “veto” refugee resettlement in their communities, opening the door for discrimination against refugees; it is also potentially an unconstitutional delegation of federal power, creating a patchwork of refugee policies across the country. This outcome would be detrimental both to refugees’ successful integration and to communities receiving them.

H.R. 4731 would further allow refugees to be placed under continual surveillance after their arrival, which would codify discrimination against refugees and raise serious privacy concerns. The current vetting process for refugees is incredibly rigorous and includes screening by U.S. federal law enforcement and national security agencies. It is simply un-American to treat persecuted individuals, who want nothing more than to start a new life in safe and welcoming communities, as criminals.

The Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act would automatically revoke the refugee status of any refugee who returns to his or her country of origin. Sometimes refugees risk their lives to return home to see a dying or sick loved one for the last time. These individuals, who have endured such trauma and still risk their own safety to care for loved ones, should not be in fear of having their protection revoked due to traveling home.

Furthermore, H.R. 4731 creates unnecessary and expensive burdens on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The legislation would require an interview with DHS before a refugee can adjust to lawful permanent residency in the U.S. and would require refugees to provide evidence that they still meet the refugee definition at the time of adjustment. DHS already has the authority to require such an interview when it determines one is needed. The time and money that would be required to implement these changes can be more responsibly spent.

The Act also imposes redundant anti-fraud measures that would create additional costs for DHS and life-threatening delays in the resettlement process for refugee applicants. The U.S. refugee program already has abundant security measures to safeguard our nation's security.

Finally, the Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act would establish undue hardship on refugees by delaying their ability to adjust to lawful permanent resident status from one year, under current law, to three years. This would be extremely counterproductive to refugee integration, employment, and self-sufficiency.

This Act would punish vulnerable refugees because it would make the process more complicated and create further delays, when refugees are already the most vetted people to come to the U.S. Passage of this Act would also send a message that refugees who have survived years of persecution and trauma and who are already woven into the fabric of U.S. communities are not welcome here. We oppose H.R. 4731 so that we may continue our country's proud tradition of protecting and welcoming vulnerable and persecuted people from around the world.

Thank you for your consideration to this very important matter.

Sincerely,

National/International Organizations

African American Ministers In Action

Alliance for Citizenship

Alliance of Baptists

Ameinu (Our People)

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

American Friends Service Committee

American Immigration Lawyers Association

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

Amnesty International USA
Anti-Defamation League
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance
The Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies
Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America
Bethany Christian Services
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Center for Applied Linguistics
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries in the U.S. and Canada
Church of the Brethren, Office of Public Witness
Church World Service
Coalition of African Communities
Community of St. Egidio USA Inc
The Episcopal Church
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ
Heartland Alliance International
HIAS
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters
Human Rights First
International Refugee Assistance Project
InterAction
International Rescue Committee
J Street
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Labor Committee
Just Foreign Policy
Kids in Need of Defense
Latin America Working Group
Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America
Little Sisters of the Assumption - USA
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Lutheran Social Services
Mercy-USA for Aid and Development
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Council of La Raza
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Forum
National Network for Arab American Communities

National Religious Campaign Against Torture
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church in North America
Oxfam America
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Provincial Council of the School Sisters of the Notre Dame Central Pacific Province
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities
Save the Children
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, USA Province
Spanish Education for Women
Survivors of Torture, International
Syria Relief and Development
Transgender Law Center
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Justice
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
United Church of Christ Wider Church Ministries
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Union for Reform Judaism
Uri L'Tzedek (Orthodox Jewish Social Justice)
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
Win Without War
Women's Refugee Commission

Alabama

Greater Birmingham Ministries

Alaska

Catholic Social Services

Arizona

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

California

African Advocacy Network

API Legal Outreach

Apoyo Legal Migrante Asociado

Armenian Relief Society Social Services

Asian Health Services

Asian Law Alliance

Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach

Asociacion de Liderazgo Comunitario

The Bread Project

The Bridge of Life

Building Home Together

Catholic Charities of The East Bay
Center For Empowering Refugees and Immigrants
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
Community Health for Asian Americans
Diversity in Health Training Institute
Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles - Interfaith Refugee & Immigration Service
International Institute of Los Angeles
International Rescue Committee
Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Lao Lu Mien Culture Association, Inc.
LightHouse Mosque
Mobilize the Immigrant Vote
North County Immigration Task Force
Northwest Forest Worker Center
Oakland Unified School District
Partnerships for Trauma Recovery
Pilgrim United Church of Christ
Priority Africa Network
Refugee Forum of Orange County
San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium
San Ramon Valley Islamic Center
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN)
St. Mary Crucifissa di Rosa Academies
UC Hastings Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Colorado

Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition

Connecticut

International Institute of Connecticut, Inc.
IRIS - Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services
Old St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

Florida

Church World Service, Broward
Church World Service, Miami
Church World Service, Palm Beach
Coptic Orthodox Charities, Inc.
Gulf Coast Jewish Family Community Services
Parkview Baptist Church
Youth Co-Op Legal Services

Georgia

Georgia Department of Public Health

Idaho

Amaraji Maha Marai
Boise to Bukavu

The Cathedral of the Rockies
First United Methodist Church, Cathedral of the Rockies
Global Community Partners
Heart Fire Intermountain Fair Housing Council, Inc.
Intermountain Fair Housing Council, Inc.
International Rescue Committee, Idaho
Saint Al's Center for Global Health and Healing

Illinois

Catholic Charities
Center for Forced Migration, Northwestern University
Chicago-Detroit Province of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits)
Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
HIAS Chicago
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Jewish Child and Family Services
La Criolla, Inc
Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants
University of Chicago

Indiana

Exodus Refugee Immigration Inc.

Iowa

Crossing Borders, Dubuque

Kentucky

Catholic Charities of Louisville, Inc.
Kentucky Refugee Ministries
Sarah's Place Women's Resource Center
Western Kentucky Refugee Mutual Assistance Society Inc. d/b/a International Center of Kentucky

Massachusetts

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition

Michigan

Detroit Jews for Justice
Dominican Sisters, Grand Rapids
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
The Foundation for Justice and Development
Lutheran Social Services of Michigan
Southeast Michigan Synod
University of Michigan

Minnesota

Jewish Community Action
Our Savior's Community Services

Missouri

International Institute of St. Louis
Jewish Vocational Service
School Sisters of Notre Dame
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, MO--Gospel Justice Committee

Nebraska

Creighton Schlegel Center for Service and Justice
Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska Inc.
Schlegel Center for Service and Justice at Creighton University
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Justice Team

New Jersey

Jewish Vocational Service of Metrowest

New York

Amnesty International Ithaca Group 73
The Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Catholic Charities of Buffalo
Catholic Family Center
CCNS Refugee Resettlement Program
Faiths for Safe Water
HealthRight International
The Interfaith Center of New York
International Institute of Buffalo
Jewish Family Service of Buffalo & Erie County New York
Journey's End Refugee Services
Sisters of Charity of New York
Tompkins County Immigrant Rights Coalition

North Carolina

Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency
Catholic Charities, Raleigh
Church World Service, Durham Immigration and Refugee Program
Church World Service, Greensboro
Every Campus A Refuge
NC African Services Coalition
Sisters of Mercy South Central Community
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, NC

Ohio

Community Refugee & Immigration Services
Heartfelt Tidbits
International Institute of Akron
International Services Center of Cleveland

Pennsylvania

Casa San Jose
Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Greensburg PA

Church World Service, Lancaster
City Church
HIAS Pennsylvania
Immigration Taskforce, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh
Justice & Peace Committee Srs. of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Multicultural Community Resource Center
Multicultural Health Evaluation Delivery Systems (MHEDS)
Nationalities Service Center
Office of Campus Ministries at The University of Scranton
Peace and Justice Committee of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition
Philadelphia Japanese American Citizens League
Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, PA
Sisters of Saint Joseph Welcome Center

Rhode Island

Dorcas International Institute of RI

Tennessee

Bridge Refugee Services, Chattanooga, TN

Texas

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Caritas of Austin

International Rescue Committee, Dallas

Vermont

New England Survivors of Torture and Trauma

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Vermont

Virginia

Church World Service/Refugee and Immigration Program, Richmond

Washington

Alliance for a Just Society

OneAmerica

Tacoma Community House

West Virginia

WV Citizen Action Group

Wisconsin

Holy Cross Sisters

Wisconsin Province of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits)

CC:

The Honorable Karen R. Bass

The Honorable Mike Bishop

The Honorable Ken Buck

The Honorable Steve Chabot

The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
The Honorable Dr. Judy Chu
The Honorable David Cicilline
The Honorable Stephen Ira Cohen
The Honorable Doug Collins
The Honorable Susan K. DelBene
The Honorable Ron De Santis
The Honorable Theodore Eliot "Ted" Deutch
The Honorable Randolph Blake Farenthold
The Honorable J. Randy Forbes
The Honorable Trent Franks
The Honorable Louie Gohmert
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The Honorable John Ratcliffe
The Honorable Cedric Levon Richmond
The Honorable Frank James "Jim" Sensenbrenner
The Honorable Lamar Smith
The Honorable Dave Trott
The Honorable Mimi Walters