

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

SCANNED/RECEIVED
BY EXEC SEC

2019 AUG 16 PM 3: 03

August 7, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Kevin K. McAleenan
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear President Trump, Secretary Pompeo, and Acting Secretary McAleenan,

As Members of the U.S. House of Representatives' Bipartisan Congressional Refugee Caucus, we write to express our concern regarding reports of proposed drastic cuts to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). We oppose any proposals that would diminish the U.S. refugee resettlement program, as this would be in direct conflict with Congressional intent in passing the 1980 Refugee Act,¹ and inconsistent with section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.²

In conversations with members of Congress and their staff—administration officials have indicated that they expect to reach their goal of 30,000 refugees for FY 2019, or come very near, by the end of the fiscal year. In fact, as of July 12, 2019, the United States has admitted 22,456 refugees this fiscal year,³ which would indicate that the United States has the ability and capacity

¹ Codified at 8 U.S.C. § 1184 and 1524.

² Codified at 8 U.S.C. § 1157.

³ Refugee Processing Center, *Arrivals by Region*, (July 12, 2019), <http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals>.

to resettle at least the historically low ceiling of 30,000 refugees in 2020. Additionally, since the creation of the United States refugee resettlement program in 1980, the United States has committed to resettling an average of 95,000 refugees each year, and has admitted an average of 85,000 refugees annually.⁴ Accordingly, we believe that the United States is capable of resettling much more than 30,000 refugees in 2020.

Cutting resettlement numbers would leave thousands of refugees who were deemed eligible to travel to the United States stranded in host countries. As of today, nearly 9,000 refugees are approved to travel to the United States, and more than 29,000 refugees have completed their USCIS interview.⁵ Amongst these individuals seeking resettlement are Iraqis who face persecution for serving alongside U.S. troops, Yazidi survivors of religious persecution by ISIS, pro-democracy leaders, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and others who remain in danger in host countries and require resettlement. By diminishing the U.S. refugee resettlement program, we would be turning our backs on these vulnerable individuals.

In light of today's global refugee crisis, with more than 68 million people displaced and 25 million refugees worldwide,⁶ U.S. leadership on refugee protection has never been more important. The vast majority of refugees find safe haven in neighboring countries, despite presenting exceptional challenges to their hosts. While the United States provides humanitarian support to these nations, financial assistance is not a substitute for our responsibility to resettle refugees.

As elected officials and Americans dedicated to the United States' longstanding commitment to refugee resettlement, we oppose any additional cuts to this critical program as well as any proposal to lessen its important role in the United States. The administration is obligated by law to consult with Congress when determining an appropriate number of refugee admissions each fiscal year⁷. We request that the administration set a Fiscal Year 2020 refugee ceiling that reflects America's historic leadership in refugee resettlement and protection, promotes our diplomacy, and protects our national security interests.

Sincerely,


⁴ Migration Policy Institute, *U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present* (2018), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united>.

⁵ *Id* at 1.

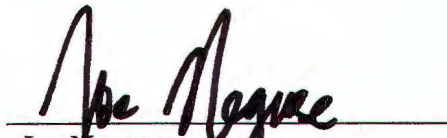
⁶ U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, *Statistical Yearbook for 2018* (June 19, 2018), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>.




Zoe Lofgren
Co-Chair
Congressional Refugee Caucus



Mario Diaz-Balart
Co-Chair
Congressional Refugee Caucus



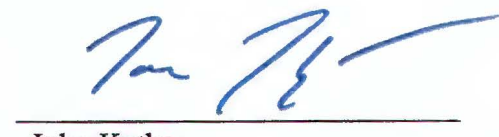
Joe Neguse
Co-Chair
Congressional Refugee Caucus




Steve Stivers
Member of Congress



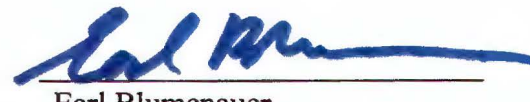
Ami Bera
Member of Congress




John Katko
Member of Congress



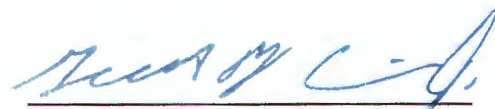
Donald S. Beyer
Member of Congress



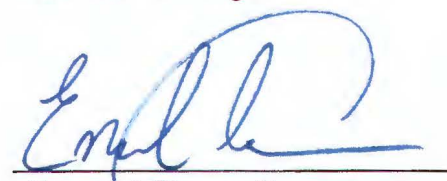
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



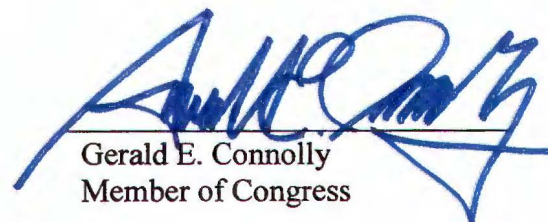
Judy Chu
Member of Congress




Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



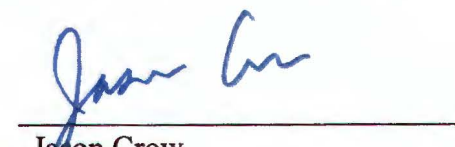
Emanuel Cleaver II
Member of Congress



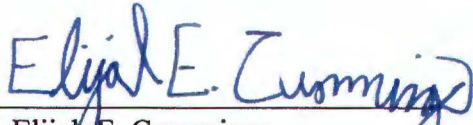
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress




Jim Cooper
Member of Congress



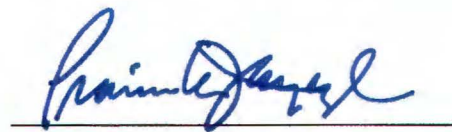
Jason Crow
Member of Congress

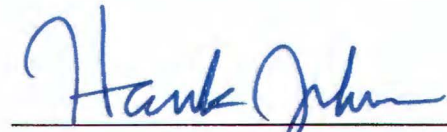

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress


Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

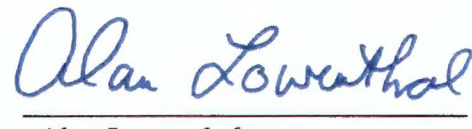

Sylvia Garcia
Member of Congress


Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

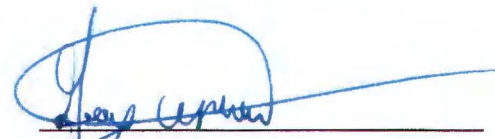

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

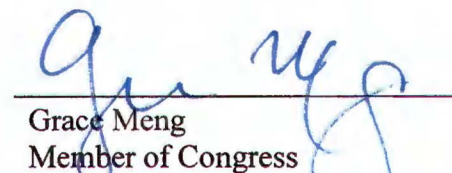

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

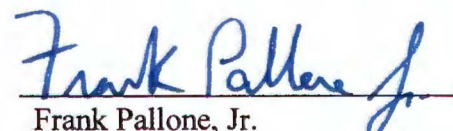

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

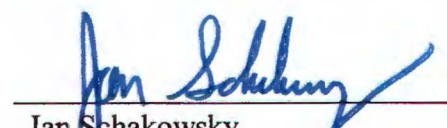

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

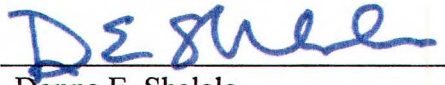

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress


Grace Meng
Member of Congress


Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress


Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress




Donna E. Shalala
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

September 24, 2019

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lofgren:

Thank you for your August 7, 2019 letter. Acting Secretary McAleenan asked that I respond on his behalf.

As you express in your letter, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) has a long history of resettling refugees in the United States and reflects this country's highest values and aspirations of compassion, generosity, and leadership.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a partner of the USRAP, remains committed to the program's mission and continues to interview refugee applicants overseas. The United States' commitment to assisting refugees extends beyond the refugee admissions program. It includes providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations around the world and offering protection to those with bona fide claims seeking asylum domestically. USCIS is working to address the challenges confronted in processing asylum requests of tens of thousands of asylum seekers in the United States. The timely processing of asylum applications is not only beneficial to legitimate asylum seekers, but also bolsters the integrity of the program and the security of the American people.

Discussions regarding next fiscal year's refugee admissions ceiling are underway and will take into account the U.S. Government's holistic approach to humanitarian assistance, which includes the critical challenge of responding to the ongoing crisis at the Southwest Border. As the United Nations Refugee Agency's "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018" report recently noted¹: "As in 2017, the United States of America continued to be the largest recipient of new asylum applications" (p. 42) and "The largest asylum-seeker population at the end of 2018 continued to be in the United States of America" (p. 47). USCIS must also address its backlog of affirmative asylum cases while maintaining adequate resources to conduct credible fear screenings for asylum seekers subject to expedited removal, and to conduct fear assessments for individuals who express a fear of return to Mexico during the Migrant Protection Protocols process along the Southwest Border. Addressing the affirmative asylum backlog is critical since the backlog can be exploited and used to undermine public safety, national security and the integrity of the asylum program.

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/5d08d7ee7.pdf>

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Page 2

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The co-signers of your letter will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 272-1940.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'K' followed by 'C II'.

Ken Cuccinelli II
Acting Director