

November 24, 2015

The Honorable Pete Ricketts
Governor of Nebraska
P.O. Box 94848
Lincoln, NE 68509-4848

RE: Welcome Syrian Refugee Resettlement in Nebraska

Dear Governor Ricketts:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to rescind your request to the federal government to suspend the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Nebraska. In the wake of recent global tragedies, we are called to act with compassion and leadership, not fear and misplaced blame. We are committed to the values of our state and our nation, including equality and freedom, and stand ready to work with your administration to ensure that all refugees are welcomed, supported, and fully integrated into our community.

Nebraska and the United States have a critical and historic role to play in our current global refugee crisis, the largest displacement of people since World War II. Specifically, we must do our part to provide safe refuge to the 4 million Syrian refugees fleeing violence and terror. As the Department of State reminds us, “the U.S. refugee resettlement program reflects the United States’ highest values and aspirations to compassion, generosity and leadership.”

Historically, the U.S. has been a leader in resettlement, offering protection to refugees from across the world and Nebraska has benefitted from these previous waves of resettlement. The courageous men, women, and children who have been resettled in Nebraska over the years are now our neighbors and friends, small business owners, and pillars of our community. In this moment, it is more important than ever that we honor this commitment and tradition with courageous leadership and compassion. Our communities stand ready and willing to welcome more refugees — from Syria and across the world — because we know that through offering resettlement and protection we can save lives and strengthen our communities.

In the wake of the tragedies in Paris, Beirut, and Baghdad we will not allow fear to override our better instincts. We know that refugee resettlement will not make our communities any less safe. We know that refugees must wait months and often years to pass the rigorous security screening processes and that refugees are the most scrutinized of any migrants to the United States.

We believe it is morally unconscionable to turn our backs on Syrian refugees fleeing terror and violence. These men, women, and children are themselves victims of ISIS and must not be blamed for the very terror they are fleeing.

We urge you to immediately rescind your request to the federal government to suspend Syrian resettlement and to commit to working with the federal government to uphold our highest American values by continuing to provide protection to refugees and investing in a generous and robust resettlement program.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Nebraska
Asian Community & Cultural Center (Lincoln)
Blackford Law LLC (Omaha)
Brown Immigration Law, P.C., L.L.O. (Lincoln)
Center for People in Need (Lincoln/Lancaster)
Center for Rural Affairs
Centro Hispano Comunitario de Nebraska (Columbus)
Great Plains Conference, United Methodist Church
Great Plains Immigration Rapid Response Team (Great Plains Conference)
Heartland Workers Center (Omaha)
Inclusive Communities
Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska
Ixim: Spirit of Solidarity (Omaha)
Justice for Our Neighbors - Nebraska
Latino American Commission
Latino Center of the Midlands (Omaha)
League of Women Voters of Lincoln and Lancaster County
Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Inc.
NAACP – Lincoln Branch
National Association of Social Workers, Nebraska Chapter
National Council of Jewish Women, Omaha Section
Nebraska Appleseed
Omaha Together One Community
Peace with Justice Ministries, Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church (Nebraska and Kansas)
Produce from the Heart (Lincoln)
Rapport International
Refugee Empowerment Center (formerly South Sudan Community Association) (Omaha)
Schlegel Center for Service and Justice at Creighton University (Omaha)
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community Leadership Team
Unity in Action (South Sioux City)
YWCA Lincoln

Cc: Senator Deb Fischer, Senator Ben Sasse, Congressman Brad Ashford, Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, Congressman Adrian Smith, Members of the Nebraska Legislature