



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 9/6/19**

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**REFUGEE ACTION COALITION OF COLORADO AFFIRMS COLORADO'S UNEQUIVOCAL  
SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINED AND ROBUST REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT**

**POWERFUL OPEN LETTER URGES LEADERS TO HONOR COLORADO'S TRADITION OF  
WELCOMING REFUGEES AND ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR VITAL ROLE IN OUR ECONOMY**

**Denver, CO**—Members of the Refugee Action Coalition of Colorado and allies have issued an open letter presented to Colorado's Congressional delegation, the Polis Administration, and mayors of the cities of Denver and Aurora urging the state's leaders to honor Colorado's longstanding tradition of welcoming refugees in keeping with our community's complementary humanitarian ideals and economic interests.

The letter echoes findings in the 2018 Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) report, [\*Economic and Fiscal Impact of Refugees in Colorado\*](#), showing that refugees vitally contribute to our shared prosperity and growing economy. It also highlights examples of community members who came to Colorado as refugees and are now thriving and civically engaged as a result of the support they found here.

The letter is endorsed by a broad and diverse coalition of over 35 faith groups, community organizations, businesses, and other entities expressing their unequivocal support for a sustained and robust refugee resettlement program in Colorado and throughout the United States.

Read the letter and see the full list of signatories below.

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The **Refugee Action Coalition of Colorado** is a coalition of organizations dedicated to defending the rights and interests of refugees at the local and national level and to providing a platform for refugees to share their contributions and concerns.

**Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning** is a nonprofit organization with a mission to empower people and organizations to succeed across languages and cultures. To find out more, visit our website at <http://www.springinstitute.org/> and follow us on [Facebook](#).



September 6, 2019

Dear Colorado Leaders and Public Officials:

We, the undersigned faith groups, community organizations, businesses, and other entities are writing to express our unequivocal support for a sustained and robust refugee resettlement program in Colorado and throughout the U.S. We see the benefits of resettlement in our communities and we know that refugees are worth the investment of Coloradans and our state.

Refugees are hard workers in our businesses and bring pride to their work. In 2017, the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) commissioned the study, “the Economic and Fiscal Impact of Refugees in Colorado,” and found that refugees contribute to our shared prosperity and growing economy, noting that “most of the economic activity created by refugees are from the wages they earn...refugees are not only working, but they are also filling critical gaps that local industries need to continue to prosper.”

Other findings from the Economic and Fiscal Impact of Refugees in Colorado report include:

- For each refugee resettled in Colorado, four jobs are created
- Refugees’ positive economic impact accrues over time. Through every \$1 in assistance received, \$1.68 is generated in output
- Through every dollar a refugee earns, over \$25 is generated in output
- Employing refugees can have a twofold benefit of generating tax revenue and economic activity while also allowing refugees to gain financial stability. Local and state governments receive \$1.23 in tax revenue for every \$1 the state spends
- Most of the economic activity created by refugees is from wages they earn
- In Colorado, most refugees join the workforce less than 90 days after they arrive in the U.S.

Refugees are our teachers, classmates, and students. They contribute a vast and diverse understanding of the world to the classroom and can share perspectives with those who did not grow up globally. Many bring knowledge from rigorous science, math, arts, social, and linguistic studies they’ve gained before arriving in the U.S., and as our world becomes more global, these perspectives become vital to a vibrant classroom and enhance the educational experience for all students.

Refugees are our neighbors, friends, and community members. Time and again, Colorado communities have benefited from refugee resettlement. As people from refugee communities bring with them a strong desire to rebuild, they often revitalize neighborhoods and areas that have been deemed “undesirable,” and are being abandoned. People bring with them expertise and new perspectives in community building, teaching, and child-rearing. They often bring a desire to create new friendships and care for their neighbors.

Nga Vuong-Sandoval, a refugee from Viet Nam who currently serves as an investigator at the Colorado Department of Law demonstrated this: “Since the time my family and I resettled in the U.S., we’ve not only have rebuilt our lives from our war-torn countries, we’ve contributed to our new home in countless and meaningful ways.”

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Nga holds a BA and Masters in Criminal Justice (MCJ) and has previously served as a City Commissioner for the Denver Mayor's Asian-American Pacific Islander Commission, is an advisory member of for Denver's Little Sài Gòn Redevelopment Project, and previously served as a Lead Intelligence Analyst at the State Homeland Security office specializing in counterterrorism and counterintelligence. She also serves on the Denver Election Advisory Committee as an advisory member.

These are only some of the ways in which we see refugees benefiting our state. We are proud of Colorado's long and bipartisan history of welcoming refugees who are fleeing conflict, violence, and war.

We know that being a welcoming community is vital to refugee resettlement and our shared prosperity, and supporting our neighbors, colleagues, classmates, and friends goes a long way.

As Janvier, who came from the Democratic Republic of Congo, stated, "When I first came to the U.S. I felt like an outsider and wasn't sure what all the looks I was getting meant, I thought I was doing something wrong. When people helped me to feel welcome it made me feel much more comfortable and I was able to adjust to the new culture and language easier. Now, at my place of work, I have coworkers who I can go to with questions and make me feel part of the team."

We represent individuals and groups from across the political spectrum, from rural and urban communities and all faiths and walks of life. Please consider this letter as an acknowledgment of broad support throughout Colorado.

Sincerely,

Paula Schriefer, President and CEO,  
Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning

Christina Braudaway-Bauman, Senior Minister,  
First Congregational Church, UCC, Boulder

Alexandria Wise, Executive Director,  
CEDS Finance

Dorielle Andrea Blankenship,  
Mothers of Preschoolers

Karen Berry, Director of Missions,  
Denver Presbyterian Church

Rabbi Fred Greene,  
Congregation Har HaShem

Nga Vuong-Sandoval,  
Colorado Refugee Speakers Bureau

James Horan, President & CEO,  
Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains

Lynn Townsend, Owner,  
David Lynn Photography

Casey Thomas, Colorado Director,  
Soccer Without Borders

Ron Buzard, Managing Director,  
ECDC / African Community Center

Robert McNown, President,  
United Nations Association Boulder County

Melissa Theesen, Owner,  
Apollo Energy

Amanda Henderson, Executive Director,  
The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado

Ellie Adelman, Founder / Director,  
The Village Institute

Sharon Knight, President & CEO,  
Hope Communities

Erika Gordan, Founder,  
D3 Indivisible Colorado

Nabeeh Hasan, Director,  
Colorado Muslim Speakers Bureau

**CONTINUED**

Iman Jodeh, Executive Director,  
Meet the Middle East

Jennifer Gueddiche, Board Vice Chair,  
Rocky Mountain Welcome Center

Rev. Dr. Brian Henderson,  
First Baptist Church of Denver

Donald F. Sutton, Pastor,  
St. Paul Lutheran and Catholic Community of Faith

Rev. Ben Konecny,  
First Congregational Church, UCC

Debbi Barnett, Managing Director,  
Connecting Points Advisory Service, LLC

Scott McAnally, Lead Pastor,  
Lutheran Church of Hope, ELCA

Angelica Walter,  
Community Outreach Coordinator,  
Church of All Nations

Wendy Kalan, Pastor,  
Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church

Bobbi Wells Hargleroad, Chair,  
Board of Outreach and Mission,  
Plymouth Congregational  
United Church of Christ, Fort Collins

Collin Cannon, Director of Advocacy,  
Immigrant & Refugee Center  
of Northern Colorado

Calina Bowman, Business Manager,  
The Senior Hub

Kim Wardlow, Executive Director,  
Audio Information Network of Colorado

Harry Budisidharta, Executive Director,  
Asian Pacific Development Center

Chris Lynn, President and CEO,  
Seniors' Resource Center

Linda P. Foster, President & CEO,  
Jewish Family Services of Colorado

Jennifer Wilson, Executive Director,  
International Rescue Committee