



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 23, 2015

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Michele Soli, Outreach Coordinator
(303) 732-6521 | msoli@springinstitute.org

**SPRING INSTITUTE & ALLIES CALL ON COLORADO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO
SUPPORT SYRIAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM**

DENVER, CO – Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning, a Denver-based nonprofit organization that provides integration services to Colorado’s refugee population, joined with 45 other civil society representatives to send a letter to all Colorado Members of Congress to call on them to support a continued robust resettlement program for all refugees, including Syrians.

This letter comes as the U.S. House of Representatives passed the American Security Against Foreign Enemies (SAFE) Act (H.R. 4038) on Thursday, which would temporarily halt the resettlement process for Syrian and Iraqi refugees trying to escape civil war.

“While some elected officials and presidential candidates have expressed fears regarding the security implications for the resettlement of refugees, we believe these fears to be misplaced given the extremely stringent screening process already in place” the letter states.

“Spring Institute welcomes the leadership of Governor John Hickenlooper and Representative Diana DeGette on this issue,” said Paula Schriefer, President/CEO of Spring Institute. “We urge the entire Colorado Congressional delegation to ensure that our state and our country continue to serve as a welcoming community for refugees fleeing violence in Syria and elsewhere around the world.”

(Full text of letter below.)

###

November 20, 2015

Dear Senator/Representative _____:

We are writing today to express our support for continuation of a robust and adequately funded refugee resettlement program that reflects the values and history of the American people. The Obama Administration's request to increase the number of refugees that the United States resettles annually from 70,000 in 2015 up to 85,000 in 2016 and to 100,000 in 2017, represents a reasonable and modest increase in response to the global refugee crisis that has reached levels not seen since the end of World War II.

Since the passage of the Refugee Act in 1980, the U.S. Congress has shown bipartisan support for opening our doors to those individuals who have fled political, religious, ethnic, or other forms of persecution. As the world's leader in resettling refugees, the United States has a proud history of providing a safe haven for victims of persecution from around the world to start new lives and to contribute to our rich and diverse population.

The State of Colorado has resettled over 50,000 refugees in the past 35 years and community-based organizations have partnered with the state to provide a range of services that help facilitate their integration. These individuals come from dozens of countries, including Iraq, Somalia, Ethiopia, Burma, Afghanistan, and Bhutan and they have strengthened our communities with their skills, perspective, and passion for becoming Americans. Syrians, who represent the largest population of refugees worldwide today, should be equally welcome to restart their lives in our prosperous state.

While some elected officials and presidential candidates have expressed fears regarding the security implications for the resettlement of refugees, we believe these fears to be misplaced. Refugees are the most heavily vetted individuals allowed onto U.S. shores. Background checks, which are conducted with the involvement of the Department of Homeland Security, Department of State, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and national intelligence agencies, typically take over a year to ensure that all individuals accepted as refugees have a genuine fear of persecution in their home country and have no ties to terrorist organizations. Of the 750,000 refugees resettled in the United States since September 11, 2001, not one has been arrested on grounds of domestic terrorism.

We call upon you to support continued American commitment to resettling the world's most vulnerable people, including individuals from Syria, and to provide adequate funding to ensure that they are able to integrate into our communities and become contributing members of society.

Sincerely,

Paula Schriefer
Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning

Rev. Paul J Kottke
United Methodist Church

Jennifer Gueddiche
African Community Center

Amanullah Mommandi
Colorado Muslim Society

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

M.D. Kinoti, PhD
Regis University

Gabriela Flora
American Friends Service Committee of Colorado

Rev. Amanda Henderson
The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado

Jill Fricker
Colorado African Organization

Roz Duman
Colorado Coalition for Genocide Awareness and
Action

Tim Kubik, PhD
Colorado Coalition for Genocide Awareness and
Action

David Miller
Denver Foundation

Lisa Taylor
Right to Read of Weld County

Ernest Duff
Aurora Strong Resilience Center

Barb Sample
Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning

Kathy Smith-Stillson, PhD, RN
Global Refugee Center Board of Trustees Member

Yoal Kidane Ghebremeskel
Street Fraternity

Laura Thompson

Julien Ross
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC)

Sharon L McCreary
A Little Something: The Denver Refugee Crafts
Collective

Linda VanDoren
Emily Griffith Technical College

Nathan Woodliff-Stanley
American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado

Vanessa Kirn
Emily Griffith Technical College

Scott L Levin
Anti-Defamation League Mountain States Region

Rev. Melanie Rosa
United Methodist Church

Paul K Alexander, PhD
Regis University*

Cheri Young
Daniels College of Business, University of Denver

David L Corsun, PhD
Daniels College of Business, University of Denver

Iman Jodeh
Meet the Middle East

Hans Meyer
The Meyer Law Office

Diana Higuera
Aurora Welcome Center

Kevin Mohatt
Emily Griffith Technical College

Rev. Bonita Bock
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Meg Allen
Colorado Providers for Integration Network

Christine Wanifuchi
Asian Pacific Development Center

Judi Terrill
Jade Woman de LaLonde, Inc.

Chelsea Primak

Peter Van Arsdale

Jim Barclay
Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains

Mekela Goehring
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network

Doug Vilsack
Posner Center for International Development*

Christine Márquez-Hudson
Mi Casa Resource Center

Ruthann Kallenberg

Paul Stein
Former Colorado State Refugee Coordinator

Lee Ann Gott
Aurora Welcome Center

*These individuals are signing in the individual capacities.