

October 12, 2020



Senator Michael Bennet
Senator Cory Gardner
Representative Diana DeGette
Representative Joe Neguse
Representative Scott Tipton
Representative Ken Buck
Representative Doug Lamborn
Representative Jason Crow
Representative Ed Perlmutter

Dear Senator/Representative:

As Members of the Board of Directors for [Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning](#), we write today to express our deep concern regarding the devastating cuts to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program under the current Presidential Administration. The most recent Presidential Determination, or cap, on refugee admissions recently announced by the Trump Administration, is an unprecedented low of 15,000 for fiscal year 2021, a number that is vastly disproportionate to the growing international need. This alarmingly low cap is part of the Trump Administration's ongoing efforts to effectively dismantle our country's refugee resettlement program, a trend which is fundamentally unpatriotic and out of step with long-standing previous policies.

As you may know, The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program was created through the *Refugee Act of 1980* with refugee admissions averaging 95,000 annually over both Republican and Democratic administrations for nearly forty years. In 2016, the final year of the Obama Administration, the U.S. settled nearly 85,000 refugees, and the admissions cap for fiscal year 2017 was set at 110,000 by the outgoing Administration. However, through Executive Orders on immigration and a slowing down of the vetting process for refugees early in the Trump Administration, only 53,000 of those 110,000 were actually resettled in 2017. Fiscal years 2018, 2019, and 2020 saw progressively lower target numbers *and* even lower figures of actual arrivals despite swelling global need, contributing to the destabilization of important, under-resourced regions of the world to where deflected refugees are increasingly fleeing. The most recent cap set for fiscal year 2021, along with the pursuit of regulations to essentially gut the asylum process through [arbitrary but insurmountable bureaucratic barriers](#) and [scapegoating of asylees in the context of the pandemic](#), only reinforce the urgent need to reverse this trend and bring policies back in line with our country's fundamental ideals and well-established practices.

At Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning, we assert that the people of this country, and Colorado in particular, largely agree. We're proud to recognize that Colorado has always welcomed refugees as an integral part of our vibrant social fabric and economy. Per the May 2018 CDHS Report, [Economic and Fiscal Impact of Refugees in Colorado](#), refugees play a vital role in our economy and shared prosperity by generating \$1.68 in economic activity for every \$1 provided to them in assistance. Yet due to sharply declining national admissions, Colorado [only admitted 838 refugees in fiscal year 2019](#), well under half of the number it welcomed in 2016. Especially during the current public health crisis when so many immigrants are bravely jeopardizing their own health as essential workers and health care providers, it is misguided, cruel, and unnecessary to place further restrictions on admissions of refugees who are historically already the most heavily vetted individuals to arrive on U.S. soil.

Resettlement agencies and organizations like Spring Institute are eager to serve the integration needs of the talented, determined, hardworking refugees who strive to become active members of our communities and

contribute to our economic vitality. It is heartbreaking for us and allied resettlement organizations to be cutting dedicated staff and downsizing programs at the same time that the infrastructure through which the U.S. has previously led the world in successfully, compassionately resettling refugees is under threat. We urge you to use your voice in the U. S. Congress to prevent the further dismantlement of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Programs and restore the program to levels that are consistent with our values and our national interests, namely an admissions cap of at least 95,000 per year in keeping with historic norms. This will do justice to our values and better serve our national and local economy as well as restore the capacity of the United States to take a leadership role among our allies and enemies alike.

Sincerely,



Margaret Kirkpatrick
Board Chair



Julie Selsberg
Board Member



Maria Soto
Board Vice-Chair & Secretary




Katy Arreola
Board Member



Lakshmi Kollengode
Board Treasurer



Victor Chen
Board Member



Jillyn Fowler
Board Member



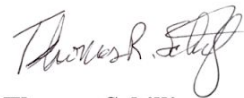
Claudia Brett Goldin
Board Member



Marschall Smith
Board Member



Paula Schriefer
Board Member & President/CEO



Thomas Schilling
Board Member