

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 16, 2020

Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott:

We write to express our strong opposition regarding your decision, announced on Friday, January 10th, to end refugee resettlement in Texas this fiscal year. We ask you to reverse this decision and provide consent for refugee resettlement to continue in our state per the terms of Executive Order 13888. Texas has long opened its doors to refugees, resettling more people than any other state in the country. For decades, our nation has supported and strengthened the refugee program, with full Democratic and Republican support. We urge you to reconsider your decision, which does not reflect the will of our state or the principles of this country.

Refugees have been an incredible asset to the United States, and in Texas, we have lead the country in refugee resettlement. In FY 2019, Texas welcomed 2,457 refugees, and in the first three months of FY 2020, 250 refugees were resettled in the state. Today, more than half of refugees in Texas have become U.S. citizens, and Texas-based refugees have 58,400 U.S.-born citizen children. The Mayors of San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, and Fort Worth along with local officials across the state have already voiced strong support for refugees resettlement - citing the vast economic and civic benefits they bring to communities.

This decision will devastate refugee communities, lead to family separation for refugee families, and leave refugees, former refugees, and American citizens without supportive services. According to the United Nations' refugee agency, more than 70 million people are being forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide, the highest on record. This is not the time for Texas to close its doors to displaced individuals and families who need a new place for shelter. Texas resettlement organizations are focused on providing assistance and resettlement services to assist those displaced by violence and discrimination in rebuilding their lives here in Texas.

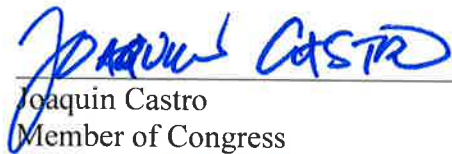
Any refugee who comes to our Nation is thoroughly screened by Homeland Security, approved by federal officials, and sent to different states depending on the coordination of the federal government with state and local leaders across the nation. However, by refusing to continue refugee resettlement, this uniform process will be scrambled. Once refugees are resettled into the United States, they are able to move across the nation to reunite with family, find economic opportunities, or to simply travel across our nation.

Without your support, it will leave many refugees without the resources they need to succeed in our nation, hindering their later success. A New American Economy report, showed that in 2015,

refugees in Texas accounted for more than \$6 billion in household income and paid \$1.6 billion in taxes. These incredible contributions to the Texas economy cannot be overlooked, and without a strong initial refugee resettlement program, we risk losing out on those contributions. It is often a hard, arduous time for those individuals and families who come to the United States without any support system, and it is integral that all states play their part in helping refugees.

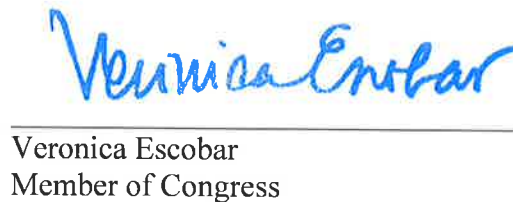
We are proud that the United States has a reputation of providing help to refugees – to those who have suffered from violent conflict, at the hands of terrorists, and as victims of trafficking or slavery. In the face of the worst refugee crisis in history, governors from 42 states have already re-affirmed our nation’s legacy of welcome and committed to continue welcoming refugees. We hope that we can soon add Texas to this list. It will only make Texas a stronger and more prosperous state in our Nation.

Sincerely,


Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress


Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress


Al Green
Member of Congress


Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress


Marc Veasey
Member of Congress


Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress


Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress


Colin Allred
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress