

August 11, 2016

U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary of State John Kerry,

The United Nations is calling the Syrian refugee crisis the worst humanitarian disaster of our time. In total, there are more people on the move worldwide than at any time since World War II. Despite the massive need for protection, the United States is admitting a historically low number of refugees.

Various individuals, organizations, and faith groups in our communities are poised to help. Unfortunately, under current law, private sector contributions cannot go towards increasing the number of refugees the U.S. admits. It's an unnecessary restriction that puts a ceiling on American generosity and ultimately cost lives of refugees on the run.

We, the undersigned Maryland legislators, are writing to urge the Department of State to pursue options for the American people to contribute towards increasing refugee resettlement.

America has a responsibility to families escaping violence and persecution. We should be taking in significantly more refugees that pass all the necessary background checks to ensure safety. The research is clear: refugees integrate into American society and contribute to our economy once settled in.

The United States remains an outlier on the international trend of utilizing individuals, churches, and organizations to provide funding and support to resettle more refugees. The Canadians have contributed tens of millions of dollars to resettle Syrian refugees. Italy, Brazil, Germany, and other nations have incorporated private sector funding into their resettlement operations to boost totals. We should have a similar program here in the U.S.

Last month, 76 Maryland legislators penned a letter to Governor Larry Hogan endorsing resettlement of Syrian refugees in the state. Moreover, a series of local government statements and resolutions show that there is an appetite in our state for increased engagement in the resettlement process.

American citizens, charities, foundations, faith groups, universities, and businesses should have the right to contribute towards increased refugee resettlement. When it's a life or death situation for a refugee family, not utilizing private resettlement will result in thousands of refugees losing their lives.

The worldwide refugee crises is showing no signs of slowing down. The U.S. must demonstrate moral courage in providing a safe haven to more refugees fleeing war and persecution. Families on the run have a home here in Maryland.

We respectfully request that our constituents be provided the opportunity to contribute towards the life saving process of resettlement.

Sincerely,

Senators

Susan Lee

Paul Pinsky

Jamie Raskin

Jim Rosapepe

Delegates

Angela Angel

Shelly Hettleman

Ariana Kelly

Clarence Lam

Brooke Lierman

Eric Luedtke

Aruna Miller

David Moon

Ana Sol Gutierrez

Edith Patterson

Andrew Platt

Pam Queen

Kirill Reznik

Shane Robinson

Will Smith

Jimmy Tarlau

Jeff Waldstreicher

Mary Washington

cc:

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski

The Honorable Benjamin Cardin

The Honorable Elijah Cummings

The Honorable John Delaney

The Honorable Donna Edwards

The Honorable Andy Harris

The Honorable Steny Hoyer

The Honorable Dutch Ruppersberger

The Honorable John Sarbanes

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen