

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 5, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128 Capitol, Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A Capitol, Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Ranking Member Mikulski:

We write to strongly urge you to fund the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) at the administration's requested level of \$3.8 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017. ORR provides critical support to local communities that serve refugees, unaccompanied children, torture and trafficking survivors, Special Immigrant Visa recipients who served alongside U.S. troops, and other vulnerable populations that are rebuilding their lives. Funding the administration's anomaly request for ORR in the Continuing Resolution is critical to supporting refugees who have already arrived and are arriving now, and to ensuring that unaccompanied children are not released into harm's way as they await their immigration hearings.

Resettling refugees is not only of immense humanitarian value, but is also a strategic tool in advancing U.S. foreign policy interests, showing solidarity with refugee-hosting countries and promoting regional stability. By demonstrating leadership on refugee resettlement, the United States has been able to encourage countries of first asylum to keep their doors open to refugees. Our nation has a long history of providing protection to persons fleeing persecution: resettling hundreds of thousands of displaced Europeans during World War II, including Jewish victims of the Holocaust; welcoming refugees from Vietnam, Cuba and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War period; and more recently resettling Darfuri refugees fleeing genocide, Bhutanese refugees forced out of their country, Iraqi and Afghan refugees who served alongside the U.S. military, and many other populations in need of lifesaving protection.

Refugees being considered for resettlement in the United States must pass through a series of security screenings, including biographic and biometric checks, medical screenings, forensic document testing, and in-person interviews. The information examined to confirm a refugee's identity is checked against law enforcement and intelligence databases, including those of the National Counterterrorism Center, Department of Defense, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of State, and Department of Homeland Security. If there is any doubt about who a refugee is, he or she will not be admitted to the United States.

Refugees pay taxes, open businesses, buy homes, and utilize their expertise, skills, inventive ideas and resilience to contribute to American communities. They also become proud American citizens and voters, with many being elected to public office. We have seen support for refugee resettlement demonstrated in our local communities, including by faith leaders and

business owners. While refugees are incredibly resilient and most find employment quickly, these new residents integrate best when provided initial support to help them get back on their feet.

In addition, unaccompanied children from Central America are seeking safety in significant and rising numbers due to continued violence and danger in their home countries perpetrated by gangs, narco-traffickers, human traffickers and other criminal groups. These children face unprecedented violence in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, which are among the top five most violent countries in the world and have some of the highest rates of female homicides globally. It is critical that these children are allowed to seek asylum in the United States. This includes ensuring that, while they await their immigration court hearings, they are released to family members and receive post-release services that ensure their safety and wellbeing. An increase in ORR funding is important to ensure that shortcuts are not taken that would place children in danger.

We urge appropriators to fund the administration's anomaly request for \$3.8 billion for ORR in FY17, so that U.S. communities have the necessary resources they need to help refugees integrate and ensure unaccompanied children are safe as they await their immigration court hearings. We deeply appreciate your support for these services and your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to find creative solutions to ensure the U.S. refugee admissions program can continue to stand as a strong program, reflective of our values and a critical component of U.S. foreign policy and diplomatic efforts.

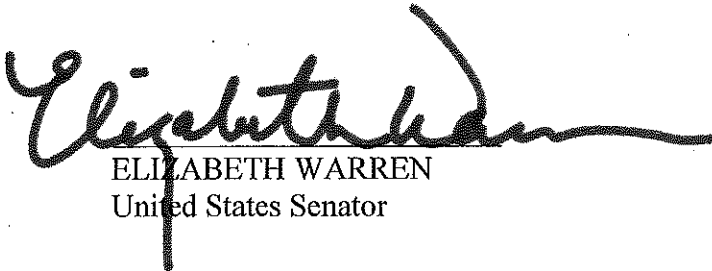
Sincerely,




AL FRANKEN
United States Senator



EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senator



ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator



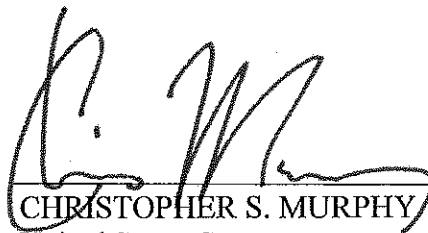
MARIA CANTWELL
United States Senator



JEANNE SHAHEEN
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United States Senator



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senator



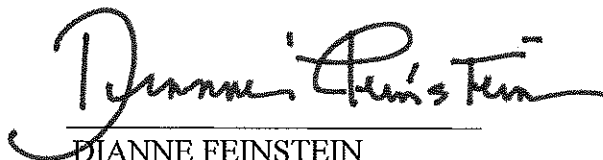
ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator



PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator



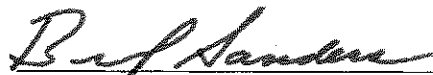
RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator



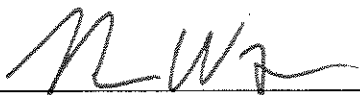
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BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



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United States Senator



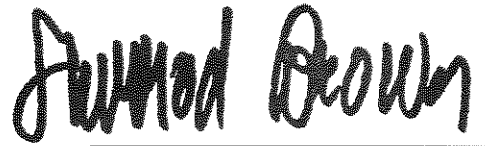
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United States Senator



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
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GARY C. PETERS
United States Senator



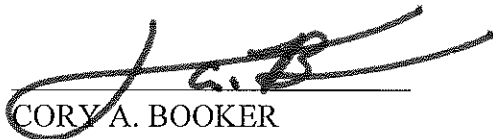
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