



Friends Committee on
National Legislation

A Quaker Lobby in the Public Interest

**STATEMENT OF
Yasmine Taeb, Legislative Representative for Human Rights & Civil Liberties
FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION
MARKUP HEARING ON: H.R. 2826, “REFUGEE PROGRAM INTEGRITY
RESTORATION ACT OF 2017”
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
June 21, 2017**

Chairman Goodlatte, Ranking Member Conyers, and members of the Committee: I am honored to submit this testimony for the record on behalf of the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

Quakers are challenged to answer that of God in all people and therefore called to act with openness to all refugees, regardless of their country of origin or religion. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) calls on Congress to treat refugees with the same dignity and respect and urges the Committee to support the U.S. refugee resettlement program.

Since 1943, FCNL has lobbied Congress to prevent war, protect vulnerable populations, and support effective, principled policies to help build a more peaceful world. Perhaps the most vulnerable population today is those who are displaced worldwide – approximately 65 million people and the highest numbers since World War II.

FCNL strongly opposes H.R. 2826, “Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act of 2017,” which would severely restrict refugee resettlement. Specifically, the bill will drastically reduce and cap refugee admissions to 50,000 refugees per year; will place refugees under continual surveillance after arrival; and could effectively prevent many Muslim refugees from being resettled in the United States.

FCNL urges members of Congress to reject any proposals that would stop, pause, or obstruct refugee resettlement in the United States. The United States has a history of welcoming refugees and immigrants. Since 1975, the United States has successfully resettled more than 3 million refugees. The United States has the most secure, vetted, and robust refugee screening process in the world, which involves the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the Department of Defense and multiple intelligence agencies. The entire vetting process, which includes biometric and investigatory background checks, fingerprints, photographs, and in-person interviews, takes 18 to 24 months.

Currently, we're grappling with the worst global refugee crisis. 34,000 people are forced to flee their homes daily because of conflict and persecution. There are more than 21 million refugees, half of whom are children.

As a faith community, FCNL urges members of Congress to speak up and speak out against derogatory, inflammatory, and fear-mongering rhetoric about refugees; it has no place in response to any humanitarian crisis. FCNL unequivocally opposes any legislation or proposal that prioritizes Christian refugees at the expense of Muslim refugees and individuals from other faiths resettling in the United States. It is our responsibility as Americans to welcome those most in need, offer refuge, and lift up our shared humanity.

People around the United States are ready and willing to welcome refugees into their homes, communities, and hearts. Higher walls do not make our communities safe or thriving; building stronger bridges does. We are called as people of faith to work in community with and answer that of God in each person – we ask that Congress do the same and welcome refugees with open hearts and minds and oppose H.R. 2826, “Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act of 2017.”

Thank you.