December 6, 2019

Dear Governor Ducey,

As evangelical Christians from throughout the state of Arizona, we’re writing to urge you to allow refugees to continue to be resettled to Arizona through the U.S. refugee admissions program. Under an executive order signed by President Trump in September, resettlement will happen only in states and localities whose leaders provide written consent to allow refugees to be resettled in the state/locality. Arizona evangelical churches and ministries have been active in serving newly arrived refugees for decades, and we pray you will not restrict the ability for us to love our global neighbors in this way.

Over the past decade, roughly 25,500 individuals from various countries have been resettled in Arizona. Many refugees resettled by the U.S. refugee resettlement program are Christians or other religious minorities who were persecuted for their faith in countries without our country’s constitutional commitment to religious freedom. Others were persecuted for their political opposition to authoritarian regimes or because of their ethnicity. Regardless of their background, refugees are human beings made in God’s image, with inherent dignity and potential, and we have been blessed by their arrival in Arizona; we desire to continue to be able to extend love to these new neighbors as an exercise of our Christian faith.

Refugees resettled by the U.S. State Department are lawfully present in the U.S. from the moment of their arrival. Each one undergoes a thorough vetting process abroad before being approved for resettlement; in fact, the vetting process for refugees is the most thorough screening our federal government has for any category of immigrant or visitor coming to the U.S.. The vetting process is remarkably successful: since the Refugee Act of 1980, no refugee resettled to the U.S. has taken a single American life in an act of terrorism. We can be secure and compassionate in welcoming refugees.

Refugees also play an important role in Arizona’s economy. With a low statewide unemployment rate of just 5.0%, labor shortages pose a significant threat to ongoing economic growth. Refugees are employment authorized from the day they arrive and are eager to embrace the dignity of work, a right that was generally denied them in the countries from which they came. Various studies have found that, in the long-term, refugees contribute significantly more in tax revenues than they cost taxpayers in the form of initial resettlement assistance or public benefits. Refugees also make significant contributions to local economies in that they have a particularly high rate of entrepreneurship, higher than other immigrants and the native-born population.

Furthermore, if refugees are no longer allowed to be resettled to Arizona, it would disrupt the reunification of many families who have been waiting years to be reunited. Many refugees are resettled to Arizona because they already have family members in the state. If Arizona restricts their resettlement, many will likely exercise their lawful right to simply move to Arizona immediately after being resettled in another state so as to join their family – but in doing so, they will move away from vital employment assistance, language acquisition and cultural adjustment...
resources offered by their resettlement organization. Refugees can best integrate into the U.S. and quickly become financially self-sufficient when supported both by their family and by a local resettlement office.

As our state’s governor, we urge you to keep the option open for local communities within Arizona to continue to receive newly arrived refugees. As always, we are committed to praying for you as you lead our state.

Sincerely,

Rev. Christopher Amaro, Redemption Church- West Mesa
Rev. Josh Blinson, Orangewood Church, Glendale
Rev. Matthew Braselton, Redemption Church, Queen Creek
Rev. Scott Brown, New Valley Church, Tempe
Rev. Caleb Campbell, Desert Springs Bible Church, Phoenix
Rev. Juan Chavez, Redemption, Tolleson
Rev. John Crawford, Redemption Church Tempe
Rev. Edward Dean, Phoenix
Rev. Gray Ewing, New Valley Church, Phoenix
Rev. Heidi Glynn, Children’s Hope Covenant Church, Chandler
Rev. Joseph Gosha, The Foursquare Church, Sun City
Rev. Josh Harp, King of Kings Church, Phoenix
Rev. Tyler James, Redemption Church, Scottsdale
Rev. Tyler Johnson, Redemption Church, Chandler
Rev. Dean Kuest, Glendale Campus Central Christian Church of Arizona, Glendale
Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Larson, All Nations Christian Church International, Mesa
Rev. Clint Leavitt, The Spring Midtown, Phoenix
Rev. Nathan Lutz, Faith Church of the Valley, Chandler
Rev. Jim Mullins, Redemption Church, Tempe
Rev. Andy Myers, Campus Compass Christian Church, Casa Grande
Rev. Jeremy Olimb, Redemption Church, Gilbert
Rev. Josh Prather, Redemption Church, Phoenix
Rev. Tom Parker, The Spring Church, Tempe
Rev. Jason Raber, Redemption Church, Chandler
Rev. Dr. Matthew Rundio, Scottsdale First Church of the Nazarene
Rev. Peter Smith, Living Faith Anglican Church, Tempe
Rev. Chris Townley, Kaleo, Phoenix
Tammy Abernethy, CEO, Hope Women's Center, Phoenix
Safaa Alsharbati Operations Manager, AIRS, Phoenix
John Cosby, Director, Immigrant Hope – Mesa
Kit Danley, President, Neighborhood Ministries, Phoenix
Adam Estle, Board Member, Orangewood Church of the Nazarene, Peoria
Tansy Kadoe, Director of Communications, Arizona Karen Baptist Church, Peoria
Mary Kaech, Refugee Ministry Coordinator, Christ Church Anglican, Phoenix
Will Krueger, Director of Staff Development, GoTEN, Peoria
Leisa McDonald, Associate Director of Global Outreach, Central Christian Church, Chandler
Dennae Pierre, Executive Director, Surge Network, Phoenix
Matthew Rucker, Associate Rector, Christ Church Anglican, Phoenix
Wah Wah Diamond, Arizona Karen Baptist Church, Phoenix
Christina Fankhauser, Catholic Charities, Phoenix
International Foundation, Phoenix
Douglas Kelley Ph. D., Arizona State University, Phoenix
Anna Kostrivs, Scottsdale Bible
Rho La, Arizona Karen Baptist Church, Phoenix
Joel Liechty, The Wesleyan Church, Flagstaff
Belinda McBride, Neighborhood Ministries, Phoenix
Michele Pasley, Orangewood Nazarene Church, Phoenix
Bre Paw, Arizona Karen Baptist Church, Glendale
Heather Ryan, Neighborhood Ministries, Phoenix
Jay Silverman, New Valley Church, Gilbert
Pat Sheridan, Monte Vista Baptist Church, Phoenix
Catherine Smith, Chandler Church of the Nazarene
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Phil Thomas, Christ Church Anglican, Phoenix
Sarah Thomas, Christ Church Anglican, Phoenix
Christopher Williams, Neighborhood Ministries, Phoenix
Seth Whitlock, New City Church, Phoenix
Marilynn Spiegel, Phoenix Reformed Presbyterian Church
Faith Smeets, Roosevelt Community Church, Phoenix
Laura Henrich, Christ Church Anglican, Phoenix
Jennifer Muriithi, Director, Tapestry, Mesa
Lauren Demianiuk, Christ Church Anglican, Scottsdale
Christina Atwood, Executive Director, Gathering Humanity, Tempe
Linda Shirey, Editor, First Reformed Presbyterian of Phoenix
Tyson Shea, New Valley Church, Gilbert
Renata Whitlock, New City Church, Phoenix
Josh McCoy, Executive Director, Mercy Ministries, Phoenix
Rowena McAllister, Valley Presbyterian, Scottsdale
Megan Lindsay, Christ Church Anglican, Phoenix
Joan Menke, Christ’s Greenfield Lutheran Church, Mesa
Nicole Jarrett, Christ Church Anglican, Phoenix
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Jai Choi, Strategic Engagement Coordinator, MIO Frontiers, Tempe
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Paula Schwartzmann, Redemption, Tempe
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Meagan South, New Valley Church, Phoenix
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Heidi Smith, Central Christian Church, Mesa
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Emily Giannone, Roosevelt Community Church, Phoenix
Vermon Pierre, Roosevelt Community Church, Phoenix
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Katelyn D'Amour, Christ Church Anglican, Tempe
Shawn Carson, Senior Warden, Christ Church Anglican, Phoenix
Cameron Blaauw, Christ Church, Phoenix
George Miley, Priest, Christ Church Anglican, Phoenix
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Suzette Schlakohl, an active member Open Door Fellowship Phoenix
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Brittani Curtis, New City, Phoenix
Berta Myers, Scottsdale Bible Church
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Mary Martany, Mar Abraham Chaldean Catholic Church, Phoenix
Rebecca Nystrom, Open Door Fellowship, Peoria
Danielle Heyer, Redemption Alhambra, Phoenix
Annaliese Pickett, Desert’s End, Mesa
Jon Deneter, Redemption Church, Glendale
Nancy Blankinship Blankinship, CCV, Phoenix
Sherrie Crandal, Living faith Anglican, Sun Lakes
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Frank Switzer, Redemption Church Arizona, Phoenix
Seth Troutt, Redemption Church, Gilbert
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Karl Mueller Senior Consultant Phoenix  
Mary Kaech Executive Director, Phoenix Refugee Connections  
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Devon Whalen, New Valley Church, Tempe  
Kaitlin Monroe, Christ Church Anglican, Scottsdale  
J Gary Nelson, Licensed Professional Counselor, Payson  
Susan Leon, Neighborhood Ministries, Phoenix  
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Renata Whitlock, New City Church, Phoenix  
Laura Clark, Union Church, Phoenix  
Phillip Liebold, MDiv, Tucson  
Justin Pressnall, Prescott Valley  
Mary Boesch, Church of the Nazarene, Chandler  
Mark Prellberg, Scottsdale First Church of the Nazarene  
Micah Wislocki, Redemption, Tempe  
Elizabeth Polen, Roosevelt Community Church, Phoenix
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