

Governor Tony Evers
Office of the Governor
115 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708

December 9, 2019

Dear Governor Evers,

As evangelical Christians from throughout the state of Wisconsin, we're writing to urge you to allow refugees to continue to be resettled to Wisconsin 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. Wisconsin 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 9,500 individuals from various countries have been resettled in Wisconsin. 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 Wisconsin; 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 Wisconsin's economy. With a remarkably low statewide unemployment rate of just 3.1%, 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 Wisconsin, it would disrupt the reunification of many families who have been waiting years to be reunited. Many refugees are resettled to *Wisconsin* because they already have family members in the state. If Wisconsin restricts their resettlement, many will likely exercise their lawful right to simply move to

Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin to continue to receive newly arrived refugees. As always, we are committed to praying for you as you lead our state.

Sincerely,

Rev. Matt Erickson, Senior Pastor, Eastbrook Church, Milwaukee
Rev. Jim Gates, Senior Pastor, Covenant Community Presbyterian Church, Rothschild
Rev. Kory Heal, Senior Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Mount Pleasant
Amanda Abegglen, Racine
David Anderson, Franksville
Deane Anderson, Christ Presbyterian, Madison
Michele Arndt, Lead Pastor, The Crossing Covenant Church, Hudson
Jess Bernstein, Deacon, Damascus Road, Mount Horeb
Ryan Bilello, Eastbrook Church, Milwaukee
Heidi Borkenhagen, Pastor, ELCA, Grafton
Susie Breaker, ELCA, De Pere
John Bryant, Chippewa Falls
Diane Bryant, Pastor, Fierce Freedom, Chippewa Falls
Jodi Buntin, New Franken
Brianna Butler, Hudson
Patty Caraher, Sinsinawa Dominican,
David Carlson, Pastor, Bethany EFC, Madison
Jennifer Crim, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran, Hudson
Loles Cruz, Immigration and Outreach Specialist, World Relief Fox Valley, Appleton
Corin Davey, Cornerstone Community Church, La Crosse
Jane Eiler, Ripon
Douglas Evansen, Contractor, New Berlin
Patricia Farmer, Elmbrook Church, Brookfield
Nicholas Fridenmaker, High School Pastor, Eastbrook Church, Milwaukee
Allison Gartman, First Christian Reformed Church, Oostburg
James Gent, Eastbrook Church, Shorewood
Brad Given, Elmbrook, Menomonee Falls
Gordon Govier, Fitchburg
Jack Guerra, Senior Pastor, Spring Lake Church, Depere
Tom Guerrasio, Eastbrook Church, Glendale
Eric Hagedorn, Associate Professor of Philosophy, St. Norbert College, Allouez
Faith Hagedorn, West Side Moravian Church, Green Bay
Jessie Hamilton, Open Doors for Refugees, Madison
Melanie Hammer, Oconomowoc
Amanda Hatton, Ascension Lutheran Church, Green Bay

Kory Heal, Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Mount Pleasant
Mahida Hernandez, Church, Milwaukee
Framaris Hernández, Pastor, House of God, Milwaukee
Lee Heyward, Lead Pastor, Elmbrook Church, Brookfield
Courtney Horrmann, Cru, Woodlands Church, Plover, Stevens Point
Molly Jasinski, West Allis
Matthew Jewell, Elder, Chippewa Valley Bible Church, Eau Claire
Johanna John, Ekklesia, Eau Claire
Edward Kleckner, County Supervisor / District 9 / Calumet County, De Pere
Tom LaCombr, Mix Church, Milwaukee
Patti Madden, Blackhawk Church, Middleton
Thomas Mahn, Eastbrook Church, Shorewood
Jennifer Mickle, Hillside Community Church, Mukwonago
Debra Miller, Women's Minister, Cornerstone Church of Spring Green
Derek Miller, Pastor, Cornerstone Church of Spring Green
Katlin Newton, Cru, Madison
Phillip Oblak, Greendale
Christina Oblak, Greendale
Tracy Peterson, All Saints Appleton
Cathy Peterson, Catawba
Kelsey Potter, Sheboygan
Kara Prestrud, Hudson
Vonda Rankin, Shepherd of the Valley, Hudson
Ed Rankin, Hudson
Kelly Ropson, Ascension Lutheran, Green Bay
Leah Rozeboom, De Pere
Susan Rozema, Crossway Community Church, Kenosha
Helen Schleicher, Oshkosh
Scott Schnuckel, Pewaukee
Ben Schoettel, Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Racine
Bela Shaw, Oshkosh
Luke Shelley, Pastor, Curtis Street Bible Fellowship, Mazomanie
Noah Smits, Appleton Alliance
Chelsea Van Eck, Madison
Stefanie Wade, Hartford
Doug Weiler, Faith Community Church, Hudson
Jonathan Werning, Mukwonago
Ruslana Westerlund, Blackhawk, Cross Plains
Melissa Wheeler, High Point Church, Madison
Gordon Williams, Elder; Member of Global Outreach Team, Woodlands Church,
Stevens Point
Stacey Wood, Janesville