

Governor Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor
State Insurance Building
1100 San Jacinto
Austin, Texas 78701

December 9, 2019

Dear Governor Abbott,

As evangelical Christians from throughout the state of Texas, we're writing to urge you to allow refugees to continue to be resettled to Texas 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. Texas 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 60,000 individuals from various countries have been resettled in Texas. 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 Texas; 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 Texas's economy. With a remarkably low statewide unemployment rate of just 3.4%, labor shortages pose a significant threat to the "Texas miracle" 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 Texas, it would disrupt the reunification of many families who have been waiting years to be reunited. Many refugees are resettled to Texas because they already have family members in the state. If Texas restricts their resettlement, many will likely exercise their lawful right to simply move to Texas

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

Sincerely,

Rev. Anyra Cano, Youth Minister, Iglesia Bautista Victoria en Cristo, Fort Worth
Rev. Bicri Singh, Pastor, Iglesia Bautista Victoria en Cristo, Fort Worth
Rev. Ricky McClatchy, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Texas, San Antonio
Rev. Sandra Leifeste, Senior Pastor, House of Prayer Lutheran Church, San Antonio
Rev. Dr. Seth Simisi, Senior Pastor, Afrika Community Church, Dallas
Rev. Tricia Baldwin, Chaplain, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Texas, Fort Worth
Rev. Kolby Kerr, Pastor, Restoration Anglican Church, Richardson
Alicia Divers, Mobilization Pastor, Bayou City Fellowship, Houston
Andrea Castaneda-Lauver, Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Orange
Bart Barber, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Farmersville
Chris Kauffman, Executive Pastor, Wayinders Church, Kyle
Christopher McLain, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Crowell
Cyrus Eaton, Campus Chaplain & Dean of Spiritual Formation, Abilene Christian
University
Danielle Gantt, Director of Finance, Refugee Services of Texas, Plano
David Bridges, Senior Pastor, Friendswood Friends Church
David Wu, Pastor Access ECC, Houston
Elijah Tanner, Resident Chaplain, Waco
Hannah Terry, Pastor, United Methodist Church, Houston
Israel Loachamin, Associate Pastor, FBC, Waco
Jason Pierce, Pastor of Global Ministries, Church Project, The Woodlands
Jason Turbeville, Senior Pastor, Southside Baptist Church, Granbury
Jen Hatmaker, Author, Speaker, and Pastor, Austin New Church, Buda
Jim Essian, Senior Pastor, The Paradox Church, Fort Worth
Mark Cloherty, Senior Pastor, Iglesia La Luz en el Barrio, San Antonio
Matthew Kaemingk, Ordained Minister Christian Reformed Church, Katy
Michael Wallens, Vicar, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Marfa
Ngun Sung, Volunteer Pastor, Midland Chin Baptist Church
Pablo Juarez, Pastor, FBC Kaufman en Español
Penny Allison, Family Pastor Antioch Community Church, Waco,
R. Nate Gilbert, Campus Minister, Cru/Destino, San Antonio
Reed Barron, Associate Pastor, Davis Street Baptist Church, Sulphur Springs
Ricardo Brambila, First Mexican Baptist Church Dallas
Rick Vasquez, Senior Pastor, Houston
Robert Kirkpatrick, Associate Pastor, Friendswood Friends Church
Robert Newell, Georgetown
Dr. Steven Bezner, Senior Pastor, Houston Northwest Church

Tom Gutierrez, Pastor, Viento Fuerte Church, Waco
 David Davidson, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Venus
 Abigail Azua, Campus Outreach Houston
 Adrian Patenaude, The Well Community Church, Austin
 Alex Lipari, Pastor, The Net FW, Fort Worth
 Alex Ward, Flower Mound
 Alisha Holt, Richmond
 Allison Gunn, Frisco
 Allison Hankins, Bayou City Fellowship, Houston
 Alyssa Morales, Sozo Church, San Marcos
 Amanda Herrera, Austin
 Amanda Hoshino, Fort Worth
 Amanda Roensch, Bayou City Fellowship, Houston
 Amanda White, First Baptist, Houston
 Amy Ponder, Mentor, Partnerships for Children, Austin
 Amy Rigall, Lake Dallas
 Amy Varenkamp, Duncanville
 Andre Lurhuma, Grace Bible Church, Houston
 Andrea Godbold, Tomball Bible Church
 Angela Ekern, The Well, Austin
 Angela Linam, First Baptist Arlington
 Angie Slaughter, St George Orthodox Church, Houston
 Annasthesia Stiles, Southcliff Baptist Church, Fort Worth
 Anne Wiman, Northway Church, Dallas
 Arvin Reyes, River Pointe Church, Richmond
 Ashlee Kieth, Amarillo
 Ashley Boterf, Volunteer World Relief Fort Worth, Midlothian
 Aubrey Slaybaugh, Benbrook,
 Bailey Warner, Abilene Christian University
 Barbara Tandu, Waco
 Bekah McNeel, The Gathering, San Antonio
 Blake Wichtowski, Mobilization Coach, Bayou City Fellowship, Houston
 Bola George, Sachse
 Brenda Kirk, CEO, Vision Weavers Consulting. LLC, Humble
 Brian Chrisenberry, Church Project, Richards
 Brian Hughes, Minister of the Gospel, Church of Christ, Garland
 Bridget Smith, Irving Bible Church, Dallas
 Brittan Leiva, Austin
 Brittany Ramirez, Field Personnel, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Duncanville
 Brooke Smith, Christ Church Waco, Waco
 Brooks Boyett, Founder, Mission 2540, Amarillo
 Bryan Varenkamp, Music Specialist, Park Cities Presbyterian Church, Duncanville
 Bryce King, Winnsboro
 C. Burke, Midlothian
 Caitlyn Lutz, Senior Staff, The Prayer Room Missions Base, Arlington
 Cale Gardenhire, The Well Church, Austin
 Caleb Todd, Dallas
 Caleb Winn, Citizens Church, Plano
 Cameron Leaskey, World Relief, Anna

Caren George, Westover Hills Church of Christ, Austin
 Cari Marshall, Mrs., Cedar Hill
 Caroline Bell, Board Member, Literacy Connexus, Fort Worth
 Caroline Cody, Vox Veniae, Austin
 Carolyn Rice, Bayou City Fellowship, Katy
 Carolyn Still, Truett Seminary Baylor, Waco
 Carolyn Winkler, Austin
 Chad & Kimberly Pyle, Sugar Land
 Charissa Stowers, Grace and Peace, Austin
 Charles Corke, Austin
 Charlotte Barnes, Campus Minister, Grace Bible Church, Huntsville
 Chase Schubert, Pastor, Watermark Community Church, Richardson
 Chris Ladd, Waco
 Christina Fitch, San Antonio
 Christina Jimenez, Waves of Faith, Fort Worth
 Christine Kelly, The Woodlands
 Christine Muhando, HWR, Houston
 Christopher Lay, Pastor, Lake Country Bible Church, Canadian
 Cindy Chen, Access Evangelical Covenant Church, Houston
 Cindy Wohl, Pearland
 Cindy Wu, Access ECC, Sugar Land
 Claire Kornfield, Park Cities Presbyterian Church, Dallas
 Clayton Waters, Arlington
 Coilla Smith, Roscoe Church of Christ
 Crystal Figueroa, Creative Director, One Church, Greenville
 Daniel Behrens, Priest, Trinity on the Border, Harlingen
 Daniel Brase, Dallas
 Daniel Leiva, The Well Austin
 Danielle Aisueni, The Well Community Church, Austin
 Danielle Barozinsky, Providence Church, Austin
 Danielle Obringer, Co-Founder, Prestige Learning Institute, Houston
 Danielle Patterson Raphale, Austin New Church
 Danielle Pester, Corpus Christi
 Darin Chancellor, Grace Bible Church/ Campus Outreach Houston, Huntsville
 Dave Tippit, Boerne
 David Guess, Sharpstown Baptist Church, Houston
 David Hartmann, Waxahachie
 Debi Morton, Grace Bible Church Creekside, College Station
 Deborah Fikes, Dallas
 Del Lopez, WMU Director for the Lubbock Area Baptist Assn., Hispana Baptist Church
 Don Brimberry, Austin New Church, Austin
 Dong Soo, Moon, Southcliff Baptist Church, Fort Worth
 Edilsa Lavoisier, Hope CC, Austin
 Edwin Austin, Dallas
 Elia Moreno, Co-Executive Director, Texas Christian Community Development Network,
 Canyon
 Elise Hines, Paradox Church, Fort Worth
 Elizabeth Carroll, Austin

Elizabeth Harris, Admin. Coordinator & MDO Director, Fellowship of Oso Creek, Corpus Christi
Elizabeth Latour, Southern Baptist, San Antonio
Elizabeth Cleaves, The Well, Austin
Eloy Galvan, Cedar Park
Emily Bentley, Sherman
Emily Morrow Loachamin, First Baptist Waco
Emma Leaskey, Prestonwood Baptist Church, Anna
Erin Jostes, Denton
Erin Kelp, The Well Austin
Erin Owen, Benbrook
Eva Walker, Watermark Community Church - Fort Worth Campus
Eve Olivarez, Antioch, Waco
Garrett Brown, Harvest Assembly of God, Fort Worth
Garrett Frosch, Flower Mound
Garrett, Collenback, Grace Bible Church/Campus Outreach Houston, Nacogdoches
Gayle Sheehan, Duncanville
Hanna Brinson, Ministry Assistant, Redeemer Christian Church, Amarillo
Hannah Ensinia, Canyon
Hannah Franzen, Antioch Community Church, Waco
Heath Purgahn, Area Director, Campus Outreach, Huntsville
Heather Sassone, Austin
Heather Smith, World Relief, Trophy Club
Heather Wood, Westover Hills, Austin
Hilary Doe, The Well Community Church, Austin
Holly Brown, Conroe
Hope Balfa Mustakim, Executive Director, Waco Immigrants Alliance
Ivan Garcia, Welcome Church, Kyle
Jace Pando, Calvary Chapel Bible College Europe, Weatherford
Jack Guy, The Austin Stone Community Church
Jacob Norris, Grace Bible Church, Nacogdoches
Jacob Wilson, Mosaic Arlington, Fort Worth
Jaime Worley, Sumc, Mckinney
James Rauhut, The Well Austin
Jan Riggs, MT28, Austin
Jana Schmitt, LPC, The Reclaimed Soul Counseling, Celina
Jason Fikes, Director, ACU Press & Leafwood Publishers, Abilene
Dr. Jeanene Reese, Highland Church of Christ, Abilene
Jeanette Miller, Fort Worth
Jen Mayes, Irving Bible Church, Dallas
Jenna Winn, Citizens Church, Carrollton
Jenna, Moles, Austin
Jennifer Friend, Austin New Church
Jennifer Kornfield, Plano
Jennifer Pappenhagen, Christ Church of Austin
Jenny Hendrickson, Arlington
Jenny Hoffman, Arlington Arab Women's Center, Duncanville
Jesse Rincones, Executive Director, Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas, San Antonio
Jessi Tidmore, Citizens Church, Carrollton

Jessica Goudeau, Austin New Church, Round Rock
Joel Cardona, Board Member, Primera Iglesia Asamblea de Dios, Houston
Jonathan Henderson, First Baptist Church McKinney
Jordan McKenna, The Village Church, Bedford
Jordan Weatherl, The Well, Austin
Joscelyn Boggs, Plano
Joseph Barron, Grace Bible Church, Houston
Joseph Hutchinson, Keystone Project, Houston
Joshua Brinson, Amarillo
Joshua Yip, Houston
Josiah Brown, Pastor, Friendswood Friends Church
Joyce Coulter, All Saints Dallas (Anglican Mission in America), Cedar Hill
Joyce, Haley, Abilene Christian University, Abilene
Juli Kring, Fellowship Chair, Grace UCC, Houston
Julie Jernigan, First United Methodist- McKinney
Kara Alexander, Robinson Church of Christ, Waco
Karen Alexander, Executive Director, Come Before Winter, Inc., Leander
Karen Morrow, Refugee Ministry and Advocacy, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Aledo
Karissa Jobman, The Well Austin Community Church
Kasey Knott, Church at the Crossing, Fort Worth
Katarina Schmidt, Longview
Kate LeBourgeois, Fort Worth
Kathleen Barclay, World Relief, Carrollton
Katie Webb, Mosaic, Waco
Dr. Kay Daigle, Executive Director, Beyond Ordinary Women Ministries, Plano
Kelly Finklea, Plano
Kelly Jimenez, The Well, Austin
Kelly Sharpe, Montgomery
Kimberly Brooks, Hulen Street Church, Fort Worth
Kristen Pool, Pastor, Dallas Bible Church, Richardson
Kristi Burtner, Preston Trail Community Church, McKinney
Kristin Alden, Hopepointe Anglican Church, The Woodlands
Kristin Holliday, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Harlingen
Lacey Dodson, Amarillo
Lane Drinnon, Redeemer Christian Church, Amarillo
Laura Barnes, Heritage Park, Alvin
Laura Daulton, Prestoncrest Church of Christ, Garland
Laura Templeton, Church of Christ, Abilene
Laurel Stevens, Grace Presbyterian Church, The Woodlands
Lauren Cochran, Christ Fellowship, McKinney
Lauren, Barron, ESL Volunteer, Grace Bible Church, Houston
Laurie Haese, Stonebriar Community Church, Plano
Lester Meriwether, Executive Director, Literacy ConneXus, Fort Worth
Lia Smith, Access Evangelical Covenant Church, Houston
Liam Tidwell, Weatherford
Lian Hram, Pastor, TCBC, Terrell
Lindsay Bixby, Austin Stone Community Church
Linton Wong, Access ECC, Houston
Lisa Ewing, Gcc, Montgomery

Lisa Yabuki, Arlington
Lois Varenkamp, Duncanville
Lynn McGuff, Normandale Baptist Church, Ft. Worth
Madison Mayfield, Paramount Baptist Church, Amarillo
Maggie Francis, The Village Church Denton, Denton
Maleny Dominguez, Campus Outreach, Dallas
Margaret Randall, Cultural Liaison, PCA, La Feria
Maria Ege, The Well Austin
Mariah Owen, The Austin Stone
Marivi Isaac, Christ the King PCA, El Paso
Marlen Rodas, Waco Immigrants Alliance
Martin Azua, Campus Outreach, Huntsville
McVey Graham, Calvary Chapel Arlington, Duncanville
Meagam Brown, Pastor, Antioch Austin
Megan Leaskey, Prestonwood Baptist Church, Anna
Mehgan DeProspero, RockPointe, Flower Mound
Melissa Emerson, Pastor, Mosaic Community Covenant Church, Missouri City
Melissa Harrington, Austin New Church
Melissa Jerkins, Servant Church, Austin
Melissa Murrell, Fulshear
Melissa Pippin, Denton
Melissa Purgahn, Area Coordinator, Campus Outreach, Huntsville
Meredith Cizlak, Harmony Hill Baptist Church, Lufkin
Meredith Stone, Church of St John the Divine, Houston
Michael Obringer, Executive Director, Prestige Learning Institute, Houston
Michelle Cannariato, Paradox Fort Worth
Molly Raney, Grace Bible Church, Houston
Morgan Higgins, The Well Austin
Nathaniel Gerber, City Tribe SA, San Antonio
Nicole Bitencourt, Dallas
Pam Sullivan, Abilene Christian University, Abilene
Patricia Villarreal, Woodland Baptist Church, San Antonio
Patty Lane, Dallas
Patty Villarreal, Co-Founder, Christian Latina Leadership Institute, San Antonio
Phillip Winn, Church of the Epiphany, Plano
Rachel Kull, Christ the King Presbyterian, Desoto
Rachel Woodhouse, Houston
Ralph Stone, Church of St John the Divine, Houston
Randall Lemley, Connect, Arlington
Ranjit Bijoy, The Well Community Church, Austin
Rebecca Armenta, Hulen Street Church, Fort Worth
Rebecca Lyon, Leander
Regan Mowdy, Fort Worth
Ross Norman, Elder, Citizens Church, Plano
Russell Chun, Mr., Kennedale, Missions Director
Ruth Stevens, Refugee Ministry Leader, Northwest Bible Church, Dallas
Ryan Pennington, Executive Director, Refugee Language Project, Amarillo
Ryan Yep, The Well, Austin
Saint Thompson, The Well Community Church Austin

Sami DiPasquale, Executive Director, Ciudad Nueva Community Outreach, El Paso
Samuel Larzabal, Northway, Dallas
Sandra Brewer, Missions Leader, Springdale Baptist, Fort Worth
Sandra Le, Bayou City Fellowship, Texas
Sandra Leonard, Community Group Leader, The Well Community Church, Austin
Sarah Bijoy, Member and Toddler Class Teacher/Coordinator, The Well Community Church, Austin
Sarah Booker, Small Group Bible Study Leader, Grace Creek Church, Longview
Sarah Bowden, Director of Operations, The Net FW, Fort Worth
Sarah Jo, Skillman Bible Church, Lancaster
Sarah Steinmann, Dallas
Saraí Muñiz, FBC Waco
Savannah Montgomery, Director of Communications and Storytelling, Bayou City Fellowship, Houston
Shannon Meredith, FOCUS / Wylie North East, Allen
Shannon Renzulli, Sojourn Galleria, Houston
Shanon Hayley, Fort Worth
Sharlyn Guthrie, For the Nations Refugee Outreach, Wylie
Sheila Joiner, Henrietta Creek Church of Christ, North Richland Hills
Sherri Rice, The Village Church Denton
Soo Jin Kim, Citizens Church, Allen
Stefanie Cortez, Central Bible Church, Bedford
Stephanie Borden, Richardson Church of the Nazarene, Carrollton
Stephanie Henderson, First Baptist Church, McKinney
Stephen Stack, The Well Community Church, Austin
Stephen Webster, Austin
Stevie Day, Marble Falls
Dr. Stuart Cocanougher, Pastor, Southcliff Church, Fort Worth
Sue Ann Spencer, Grace UMC, Sherman
Sui Ling, Bethel Baptist Church of Texas, Lewisville
Summer Husband, Grace Bible Church, Houston
Susan Blackburn, St. Martin de Porres, Driftwood
Susan Smith, Bent Tree Bible Fellowship, Plano
Tamra Leaskey, Anna
Taylor Stephenson, San Angelo
Tere Hager, Westover Hills Church of Christ, Austin
Teresa Walton, Haltom City
Teri Poon, Austin
Tess Cagle-Rolli, Pre-K Coordinator, The Well Austin
Tess Clarke, Normandy Community Church, Dallas
Tim Miles, Diversity Director, Campus Outreach, Houston
Tim Moore, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church Leander
Ting-Long Wu, EFC Houston Church, Sugar Land
Travis Hillman, Campus Outreach, Huntsville
Ty Bowden, Associate Director, The Net Fort Worth
Velvet Lawrence, Baptist, Willis
Veronica Pope, Spring
Victoria Mason, The Well Austin, San Marcos
Vikeena Wolfe, Gracepoint Church, Coppell

Vonni Gant, MD, Dallas
Waymon Hinson, Park Avenue Church of Christ, Denison
Wendy Atkins, Duncanville
Wendy Blacutt, The Well Austin
Wendy Kilmer, Church of Christ/Non-denominational, Abilene
William Kornfield, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Plano
William Taylor, Houston