

Governor Henry McMaster
State House
1100 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

December 9, 2019

Dear Governor McMaster,

As evangelical Christians from throughout the state of South Carolina, we're writing to urge you to allow refugees to continue to be resettled to South Carolina 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. South Carolina 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 1,800 individuals from various countries have been resettled in South Carolina. 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 South Carolina; 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 South Carolina's economy. With a remarkably low statewide unemployment rate of just 3.2%, 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 South Carolina, it would disrupt the reunification of many families who have been waiting years to be reunited. Many refugees are resettled to *South Carolina* because they already have family members in the state. If South Carolina restricts their resettlement, many will likely exercise their lawful right to simply move to South Carolina 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 South Carolina to continue to receive newly arrived refugees. As always, we are committed to praying for you as you lead our state.

Sincerely,

Rev. Brandon Barrett, Senior Pastor, Greenville ARP Church
Rev. David Griffin, Pastor, Greenville ARP Church
Rev. Daniel Griswold, Senior Pastor, The Ridgeville Charge UMC, Ridgeville
Dr. Robert Bell, Senior Pastor, Young Memorial Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Anderson
Edson Dos Santos, Senior Pastor, Comunidad Cristiana Internacional, Greenville
Ruth Altemus, Hope Church Columbia
Jonathan Anderson, Greenville
Fredrick Andrews, Pastor of Congregational Care, ALIVE Wesleyan Church, Central
Carrie Bailey, Taylors
Emma Ballentine, Columbia
Jack Beall, Engaging the World Pastor, Mitchell Road Presbyterian Church, Greenville
Robert Black, Professor Emeritus, Southern Wesleyan University, Central
Laura Blank, Greenville
David Blanton, Pastor (Retired), Southern Baptist, Roebuck
Jane Bowden, Summerville
Tim Burden, Assistant Pastor, Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, Columbia
Kay Burklin, Refugee Liaison Europe, Mission to the World, Greenville
Heiko Burklin, Greenville ARP
Don Burnett, Pastor Emeritus, Hope Church, Columbia
Amanda Campbell, Riverbend Community Church, Lexington
Pam Clifton, Conway
Tiffany Coler, Gateway Baptist, Irmo
Beth Cruce, Young Memorial, Anderson
Sara Damewood, Social Ministry Coordinator, St John of the Cross Catholic Church, Leesville
Georgie Davis, Owner/Operator, Evangelical, Orangeburg
Haley Dean, Greenville
David Delk, Greer
Deborah Dinstel, Refugee Minister, Hope Church Columbia, Columbia
Wendy Faircloth, Columbia
Dr. Dan Forrest, Mitchell Road Presbyterian, Greenville
Stacey Gardin, Piedmont
Joel Geddings, Pastor, Fellowship Baptist Church, Lexington
Kim Guilliams, Kingdom Kids Choral Director, Mitchell Road Presbyterian Church, Taylors
Jeff Haley, Lexington
Pam Hamilton, Irmo

Catherine Hoecke, Riverbend Community, Columbia
 Johnathon Hornby, Greenville ARP, Taylors
 Clair Horner, Taylors
 Peggie Johnson, Director of Women's Ministries, Columbia
 Janet Johnson, Clemson
 Charissa Ketcherside, Church of the Apostles, Columbia
 Nicole Kinney, Riverbend Community Church, Lexington
 Rev. Joshua Knott, Senior Pastor, Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, Columbia
 Chelsea Koch, GraceLife Church, Columbia
 Renee Laine, Columbia
 Kristen Little, Pelham Road First Baptist, Greenville
 Amanda Marrs, Wesleyan, Pickens
 Elizabeth Martin, Mitchell Road Presbyterian Church, Greenville
 Robert McAlister, Former Pastor/Elder, Riverbend Church, Lexington
 Abigail McCoy, Columbia
 Sarah McKillop, Arsenal Hill ARP Church, Columbia
 Sarah Melville, Lugoff
 Elizabeth Merritt, Executive Director, First Baptist Church of Augusta, North Augusta
 Sidni Mikulecky, Riverbend Community Church, Lexington
 Matthew Miller, Pastor, Greenville Multicultural Church, Greenville
 Emily Miller, Senior Pastor, The Wesleyan Church, Greenville
 Ilesia Muniz, Greenville Multicultural
 Jennifer Osorno-Bejarano, Grace Church, Taylors
 Aimee Pawluk, Lexington
 L. Marinn Pierce, Rock Hill
 N.K. Prabhakaran, Hope Church Columbia, Ridgeway
 Buddy Rampey, Greenville Multicultural Church, Piedmont
 Seth Ray, Greenville
 Holly Revell, Aiken
 Mary Robbins, Radius Church, Lexington
 Frankie Rodriguez, Pastor, Iglesia Wesleyana El Camino, Greenville
 Brandon Sandifer, Senior Pastor, Pineview Baptist Church, West Columbia
 Thomas Shirk, Senior Pastor, Rocky Springs Baptist Church, Columbia
 Benjamin Skaggs, Pastor to Congolese Refugees, Hope Church, Winnsboro
 Sarah Joy Smith, Beth Haven Baptist Church, Taylors
 Kim Strickland, Charleston
 Eric Strickland, Charleston
 Mireille Tanner, Senior Pastor, Nueva Generación, Spartanburg
 Noah Tassie, Greenville Multicultural Wesleyan, Honea Path
 Rachel Turner, Arsenal Hill Presbyterian Church, Columbia
 Larry Umberger, Columbia
 Jonathan Varner, Executive Director, Friends of Internationals, LLC, Clemson
 Heather Vitaris, Greenville Multicultural
 John Weirick, Greenville
 Debbie Wenger, Children's Ministry Director, Cornerstone Presbyterian Church,
 Lexington
 Mark Wenger, Cornerstone PCA, Lexington
 Garrett Whitley, Greenville Multicultural
 Clara Willet, Arsenal Hill ARP, Columbia

Marilyn Lekan Williams, Our Lady of the Hills Catholic, Columbia
Heather Wise, Columbia
Fran Wise, Hope Church, Blythewood
Janaye Wolkos, Cross Community, Beaufort
Lindsey Woodworth, Arsenal Hill, Columbia
Kristi Zakrzewski, Riverbend Community Church, Lexington