

Governor Kevin Stitt  
Office of the Governor  
Oklahoma State Capitol  
2300 N Lincoln Blvd.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

December 9, 2019

Dear Governor Stitt,

As evangelical Christians from throughout the state of Oklahoma, we're writing to urge you to allow refugees to continue to be resettled to Oklahoma 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. Oklahoma 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 3,000 individuals from various countries have been resettled in Oklahoma. 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 Oklahoma; 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 Oklahoma'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 Oklahoma, it would disrupt the reunification of many families who have been waiting years to be reunited. Many refugees are resettled to *Oklahoma* because they already have family members in the state. If Oklahoma restricts their resettlement, many will likely exercise their lawful right to simply move to

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

Sincerely,

- Rev. Travis Lee, Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Mustang
- Rev. Josh Olds, Pastor, Tulsa Chinese Christian Church
- Rev. Chris Yarbrough, Pastor, Western Oak Church of the Nazarene, Oklahoma City
- Susan Agel, Pastor, Resurrection Free Methodist Church, Oklahoma City
- Dawson Alley, Youth Minister, Hillside Baptist Church, Shawnee
- Samantha Bailey, Metroplex Church of the Nazarene, Oklahoma City
- Kim Bakaev, Broken Arrow
- Janet Bavido, Catoosa Hills Christian Church, Claremore
- Jon Bemis, Retired Elder, Church of the Nazarene, Guthrie
- Harry Black, Executive Director/Treasurer, Capital Baptist Association, Oklahoma City
- Dillon Byrd, Community Director, Frontline Church, Oklahoma City
- Kathleen Byrd, Freedom Church, Owasso
- Allison Byrd, Fellowship Bible Church, Tulsa
- David Callahan, Elder, Frontline Church, Oklahoma City
- Hannah Campbell, Oklahoma City
- Richard Carlton, Professor of Cross-Cultural Ministry, Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee
- Fr. Nathan Carr, St. James Episcopal Church, Oklahoma City
- Daniel Chaboya, St. Pius X, Tulsa
- Tre Clark, Community & Education Pastor, Britton Christian Church, Oklahoma City
- Ben Clark, Pastor, International Community Church, Oklahoma City
- Peggy Cole, Freedom Church, Owasso
- Katie Cook, Life.Church, Oklahoma City
- Eric Costanzo, Senior Pastor, South Tulsa Baptist Church, Tulsa
- Julio Crespo, Senior Pastor, Iglesia Bautista Central, Edmond
- Nancy Crowley, Verdigris Assembly of God, Claremore
- Stephen Crowley, Verdigris Assembly of God, Claremore
- Kara Culp, Executive Director, Welcomers International Association, Tulsa
- Jana DeLano, Assistant Director of Human Resources, IPHC Ministries, Bethany
- Drew Dinnel, Pastor, Muskogee Church of the Nazarene, Muskogee
- Alice Doyle, St Pius X Catholic Church, Tulsa
- Samantha Dunkin, The Salvation Army, Coweta
- Ryan Fisher, Youth Pastor, Britton Christian Church, Oklahoma City
- Clark Frailey, Lead Pastor, Coffee Creek Church, Edmond
- Kirk Goss, Pastor, International Community Church, Oklahoma City
- Reid Green, Stillwater
- Charlie Hall, Worship + Liturgy Pastor, Frontline Church, Oklahoma City

Jennifer Hallett, Life.Church, Oklahoma City  
 Mike Hart, Missions Pastor, First Baptist Church of Tulsa  
 John-Mark Hart, Pastor, Christ Community Church, Oklahoma City  
 Nicole Haschke, East Cross UMC, Bartlesville  
 Mike Hays, Senior Pastor, Britton Christian Church, Oklahoma City  
 Jordan Hedrick, Christ Community Church, Oklahoma City  
 Casey Hollingsworth, Pastor, New Life Church of the Nazarene, Miami  
 Cynthia Hollingsworth, Church of the Nazarene, Miami  
 Nathan Hurlburt, Pastor, Soldier Creek Baptist Church, Midwest City  
 Ben Janssen, Lead Minister, Crosstown Church, Oklahoma City  
 Luke Jarboe, Christ Community Church, Oklahoma City  
 Elijah Jarboe, Worship Pastor, Life Fellowship Church, Pryor  
 Micah Jones, Putnam City Baptist, Oklahoma City  
 Casey Jones, Executive Director, American Dream Center Institute, Tulsa  
 Mary Jones, Wagoner  
 April Jones-Park, Tulsa  
 Alicia Kobilnyk, Church on the Move, Tulsa  
 Moriah Lamb, FBC Tecumseh, Shawnee  
 Tiffany Landreth, Pastor, Nazarene, Watonga  
 Phillip Larsen, CFO, Crossover Radio/West Metro Community Church, Yukon  
 Terry Laudett, Chaplain, Oklahoma Rural Letter Carriers Association, Glenpool  
 Timothy Livingston, FBC Piedmont, Piedmont  
 Sarah Logsdon, Tulsa  
 Sherri Longobardi, Oklahoma City  
 Ledtkey Mc Intosh, Pastor, Glorieta Baptist Church, Norman  
 Harold McKellips, District Superintendent, Northeast Oklahoma District Church of the Nazarene, Bixby  
 Denise McKinney, Worship and Community Pastor, Redeemer Church, Tulsa  
 Julie Miller, Edmond  
 Scott Moore, Senior Pastor, Nazarene, Broken Arrow  
 Jeff Nine, Pastor for Church Planting & Strengthening, Frontline Church, Oklahoma City  
 John Niyondiko, Pastor, Putnam City Baptist Church, Edmond  
 Debra Owen, Catholic, Tulsa  
 Bryan Padgett, Pastor, Redeemer Church, Stillwater  
 Suparshva Parikh, Christ Community Church, Oklahoma City  
 Ed. Payton, Lay Leader, Boston Avenue United Methodist Church, Tulsa  
 Chad Penner, Pastor, Canadian Hills Nazarene Church, Yukon  
 Cana Radford, Moore  
 William Reversat, Senior Pastor, Iglesia Bautista El Camino, Oklahoma City  
 Darcy Rhodes, Edmond  
 John Riner, Director of Ministries, Frontline Church, Oklahoma City  
 Tara Rittler, Crossover Bible Church, Tulsa  
 Sarah Robbins, Broken Arrow  
 Chrystalynn Sanchez, ROC INC, Oklahoma City ok  
 Kirsten Schueler, Women's Ministry Team Volunteer, Quail Springs Baptist Church, Oklahoma City  
 Jessica Scott, First Baptist Church of Nicoma Park, Midwest City  
 Chauncey Shillow, Associate Pastor, Christ Community Church, Oklahoma City  
 Ann Shockley, Broken Arrow

Stephen Snider, United Methodist Church of the Servant, Edmond  
Linda Starkey, Nazarene, Bethany  
Martin Stovall, Christ Community Church, Oklahoma City  
Carlie Sturgeon, Adult Education Coordinator, YWCA, Tulsa  
Carol Swope, Registered Nurse, Oklahoma City  
Anthony Taylor, Pastor, Frontline Church, Oklahoma City  
Susan Terhune, Rejoice, Owasso  
Brady Thelander, Pastor, Sapulpa Church of the Nazarene  
Carrie Thomas, Edmond  
Christi Tom, Discovery Bible Fellowship (Mennonite Brethren), Tulsa  
Allyson Trimble, Vici Church of the Nazarene  
Wes Veitch, Oklahoma City First Church of the Nazarene  
Cameron Whaley, Pastor, Canadian Valley Baptist Church, Mustang  
Ian White, Oklahoma City  
Linda Wilcox, Mayflower Congregational, Oklahoma City  
Professor Emeritus Linda Wilcox, Professor Emeritus, Mayflower Congregation Church,  
Oklahoma City  
Zach Winters, Transformation Church, Tulsa  
Sharon Wright, Counselor, Boswell