

EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION table.

January 24, 2025

Dear President Trump, Secretary Rubio and Governor Noem,

As evangelical Christian leaders, we wish to congratulate you, President Trump, on your inauguration as our nation's 47th president, Secretary Rubio on your confirmation as Secretary of State and Governor Noem as your nomination as Secretary of Homeland Security.

One of the most important rights guaranteed to all Americans is religious liberty, the freedom for Americans of any faith to worship freely and practice their religion without governmental interference. We are thankful for President Trump's strong commitment to this core value throughout his first term.

We're writing to request that you take this vital principle into account with respect to two recent immigration policy changes.

First, on January 21, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced the termination of longstanding policy guidance that limited the circumstances under which Immigrations and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection officers would engage in immigration enforcement activities in "sensitive locations" such as churches, schools and hospitals.

We believe that this guidance was prudent; it allowed immigration enforcement actions to occur in and around such sensitive locations with supervisory approval for compelling public safety reasons, but it provided the assurance that, under normal circumstances, DHS would refrain from disrupting church services, classroom settings or medical care.

The public notice of the termination of this "sensitive locations" guidance stated that "criminal aliens — including murders [sic]...will no longer be able to hide in America's schools and churches to avoid arrest." We wish to assure you that we know of no evangelical church or school that has ever harbored a murderer from arrest, and we would be very surprised if this has ever occurred — but, in any case, DHS enforcement in such an unlikely circumstance would be permissible under the now-revoked guidance.

While very few evangelical churches are involved in housing immigrants within their facilities, what is true of evangelical churches is that we unabashedly offer the hope of the gospel to all — without asking people for immigration documents. The effect of the revocation of this guidance has been that many immigrants and their U.S. citizen family members are afraid



that attending a Sunday morning worship service or a Wednesday night Bible study could put them at risk of deportation or of separation from their loved ones.

The result of this policy change, presumably unintentionally, is to deter people from attending churches, limiting our ability to reach people with the hope of the gospel and the opportunity for ongoing discipleship, which are central to our God-given mission, and contributing to the lamentable decline in church attendance in the United States. Christian schools, colleges, universities and healthcare ministries face similar barriers.

We thus urge you to re-implement the “sensitive locations” guidance that was wisely in effect throughout the first Trump administration, out of respect for the religious liberty of evangelical Christians and of Americans of other religious traditions as well.

Secondly, while we are thankful for our Constitution’s commitment to religious freedom for all Americans, we believe that religious freedom should be afforded to all people, in every country. We’re keenly aware of countries where authoritarian governments and non-governmental terrorist groups rob Christians and others of the right to freely practice their faith, subjecting them to persecution and, in some cases, martyrdom. According to international religious freedom watchdog group [Open Doors US](#), 380 million Christians globally suffer high levels of persecution or discrimination on account of their faith — as do many other religious minorities.

The first Trump administration honorably prioritized advancing international religious freedom throughout its foreign policy, and we trust you will resume this commitment in this second administration. However, we believe that a robust commitment to international religious freedom should also include welcoming thoroughly-vetted, legally-admitted refugees who were forced to flee their homelands because of religious persecution.

The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program has a long history of doing just that: last year alone, the United States welcomed [nearly 30,000 Christian refugees](#) from the 50 countries where Open Doors says that Christians face the most severe persecution in the world, including countries like Iran, Syria, Burma and Afghanistan. Other religious minorities such as Yezidi and Jewish refugees have also benefited from the resettlement program, along with those persecuted for other grounds under U.S. law such as their race or political opinion. The [Heritage Foundation](#) has affirmed that “refugees undergo more vetting than any other immigrants to the U.S.,” and a [2024 poll](#) found that 71 percent of evangelical Christians believe that the U.S. has a moral responsibility to receive refugees.

On January 20, President Trump [ordered](#) a temporary suspension of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, with the instruction that the Secretary of Homeland Security and Secretary of State should recommend, within 90 days, whether it is within U.S. interests to resume the program.

President Trump, you [have said](#) that you want people to come into the country “in the largest numbers ever” — but to do so legally. Lawfully admitted refugees who have fled persecution on account of their faith could help you to achieve this goal, meeting the needs of the U.S. labor market in an economy we hope will thrive under your leadership, while also offering protection and freedom to individuals persecuted and denied religious liberty abroad.

We thank you for considering these concerns. Please know that we are committed to praying for each of you, that God would grant you wisdom as you govern and represent the interests of our great nation.

Sincerely,

Evangelical Immigration Table Organizations:

Asian American Christian Collaborative

Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Faith and Community Empowerment

National Association of Evangelicals

National Latino Evangelical Coalition

World Relief