

Who Cares about Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Immigrants?

Ipswich Refugee Program: Letter to Our Community

Last year, the United Nations Refugee Agency's annual Global Trends report* indicated that forced displacement of populations worldwide is at its highest level in decades, with an estimated 65.6 million people uprooted from their homes by conflict and persecution at the end of 2016. Given the massive scale of this ongoing international disaster, there is an urgent need for nations to develop fair and thoughtful solutions to the growing list of humanitarian, political, and logistical challenges.

But immigration reform is complicated and often difficult. Reasonable, caring people can have different ideas about how immigration should look in the future. However, there is one principle that most of us can agree on: Careless, irresponsible, and inhumane treatment of families and children must never be used to deter immigration or asylum seekers in the United States. Nor should such treatment or threats of such treatment be used as a lever to achieve a particular vision of immigration policy.

Most of us are the descendants of individuals who came to this country to pursue opportunities for a better life and/or to escape violence and discrimination. In our collective family histories, evidence abounds that the United States is better for its acceptance of the tired, the poor, the hungry, the minority, and "the wretched refuse" of the world's intractable conflicts.

As we formulate future policies regarding immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, we must never succumb to dehumanizing those who come here in desperation, pursuing safety and the hope for a better life. No parent, grandparent, aunt, or uncle would set out on a long, arduous, and exceedingly dangerous journey to the U.S.—especially with a child—if the circumstances in their home countries were not intolerable and unlivable.

We must never forget that those who arrive at our borders, whether lawfully or not, are human beings with whom we share much. As we seek to sort out their future we must never deny them the essentials of life—the decent treatment all human beings are entitled to, the food, shelter, and medical care necessary for their survival, and due process of the law.

As U.S. citizens, we must insist that our elected officials ensure this standard of care and concern for those who seek to enter our country. As we look to the future, our strength and character as a nation will depend largely on our openness to embrace new arrivals and to welcome the skills, ideas, and potential they will bring. For us to do anything less is to be unfaithful to our history, our ideals and our best selves.

Respectfully,

Ipswich Refugee Program

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Rev. Rebecca Pugh and Rev Tom Lenhart

*Link to UN High Commission for Refugees Report

<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/stories/2017/6/5941561f4/forced-displacement-worldwide-its-highest-decades.html>

To Contact Elected Officials

President Donald Trump: www.Whitehouse.gov

Congressional Representatives

Edward Markey: www.markey.senate.gov

Elizabeth Warren: www.warren.senate.gov

Seth Moulton: www.moulton.house.gov

Massachusetts Elected Officials

Governor Charlie Baker: www.Mass.gov

Senator E. Bruce Tarr: Bruce.Tarr@masenate.gov

State Representative Brad Hill: repbradhill@hou.state.ma.us

Website: repbradhill.com

Who Cares?

(Links to contact information for MA Agencies and Non-Profits assisting Refugees, Immigrants and Asylum Seekers)

MA Immigrant Refugee Advocacy Coalition: www.Miracoalition.org

PAIR, Providing Asylum-Seekers/ Immigrants Representation Project, pro bono legal help and other services: www.pairproject.org

Catholic Charities of Greater Boston: www.ccggb.org

Ascentria Care Alliance: www.ascentria.org

International Institute of New England: www.iine.org

Waltham Alliance for Teaching, Community Organizing and Housing, a community development corporation: www.watchcdc.org

TRII, The Right to Immigration Institute, Pro Bono Legal help:
www.therighttoimmigration.org