

May 1, 2020

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned 192 national, state, and local Jewish organizations from around the United States, recognize that our country's needs during the COVID-19 crisis are vast, but strongly urge you to ensure that our country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic includes resettled refugees, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients, asylum seekers, and asylees.

While many of us can safely socially distance ourselves within our homes, we are constantly reminded that the same is not true for many of our immigrant neighbors, many of whom are on the frontlines risking their own health and safety to keep our country running. Any measures aimed at combating COVID-19 that exclude immigrants place the whole country at risk.

As Congress considers the next COVID-19 legislative package, we urge you to include provisions that will ensure that resettled refugees, especially recent arrivals, as well as SIV recipients and others who receive resettlement and integration services, also have access to the safety nets and literal life-saving services that so many of us need right now. Specifically we call on you to:

- Provide \$642 million in Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) funds for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This is the minimum level of funding that resettlement experts have agreed is needed to support services that would help resettled refugees, SIV recipients, and asylees access cash and medical assistance, housing assistance, assistance with utilities, transportation, food, and health care so that they can stay healthy and keep their heads above water while it remains terribly difficult to find and keep employment and access health care.
- Clarify that all resettled refugees and asylees and SIV recipients, including those admitted in 2019 and 2020, should be eligible for the direct cash rebates included in the CARES Act and any future economic relief measures.

In addition to these important health and stimulus measures, we also urge you to push the administration to ensure that the fight against COVID-19 does not sacrifice fundamental refugee protections in the process. For example, while we understand why the U.S. put the U.S. refugee resettlement program largely on pause during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the administration should resume refugee arrivals as soon as public health experts deem that international travel is once again safe. The administration must also take all necessary steps, including the extension of security check validity periods, to ensure that the U.S. meets the FY2020 Presidential Determination of 18,000 refugee admissions. Moreover, efforts to curb the pandemic must not violate domestic and international laws. The U.S. should reverse recent policies that deny people access to the U.S. asylum system and due process at our borders. Asylum seekers cannot be turned away and denied the opportunity to seek asylum, even during a global health crisis.

As Jews, we have a visceral understanding of what it means to be refugees. Our families came to the United States looking for safety and freedom just as today's refugees do. Our shared histories and current circumstances reveal how we are all dependent on one another in ways that we perhaps could not have understood even just several weeks ago.

We therefore ask that you provide the necessary safeguards detailed in this letter, and in doing so, help to protect all of us from the ravages of COVID-19 and the further decimation of our country's core refugee protections.

If you have any questions, please contact Naomi Steinberg (naomi.steinberg@hias.org) and/or Tammy Gilden (tgilden@thejcpa.org).

Sincerely,

HIAS
Jewish Council for Public Affairs

National

30 Years After

ADL

ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal

Ameinu

American Jewish Committee

American Jewish World Service

Association of Rabbis and Cantors

Avodah

B'nai B'rith International

Central Conference of American Rabbis

Habonim Dror North America

J Street

Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights

Jewish Alliance of Concern Over Burma

Jewish Labor Committee

Jewish Women International

Jewish World Watch

Keshet

Men of Reform Judaism

National Council of Jewish Women

Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

Rabbinical Assembly

Reconstructing Judaism

Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

The Shalom Center

The Workers Circle

Tikkun

Tivnu: Building Justice
Union for Reform Judaism
Uri L'Tzedek
Women of Reform Judaism

Arizona

Arizona Jews for Justice

California

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley
Congregation Kol Ami.
Congregation Kol Shofar
Habonim Dror Camp Gilboa
Jewish Action NorCal
Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties
Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
Jewish Justice Advocates of Temple Beth El of South Orange County
Jewish Labor Committee Western Region
Jewish World Watch
Leo Baeck Temple
Never Again Action - Bay Area
Temple Beth Am, Los Angeles
Temple Beth David
Temple Beth El of South Orange County
Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills
Temple Israel of Hollywood

Colorado

Aspen Jewish Congregation
Colorado Jewish Community Relations Council
Congregation Bonai Shalom
Temple Micah

Connecticut

Federation for Jewish Philanthropy Upper Fairfield County
Jewish Community Relations Council at the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven
Temple Bnai Israel

Delaware

Jewish Family Services of Delaware

Florida

Jewish Community Relations Council of Broward County, FL

Georgia

National Council of Jewish Women, Atlanta Section
The Temple

Illinois

Chicago Jewish Labor Committee
Chicago Jews for Refugees Coalition
Congregation Rodfei Zedek
JCFS Chicago
Jewish Community Relations Council of Springfield, IL
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs
Jewish Federation of Chicago
Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation
Makom Solel Lakeside
Mishkan Chicago
National Council of Jewish Women, Chicago North Shore Section
Oak Park Temple B'nai Abraham Zion

Indiana

Beth-El Zedeck
Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation
Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council
Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne
Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis
Jewish Federation of St. Joseph Valley
Temple Beth-El

Kansas

Jewish Community Relations Bureau|AJC, Kansas City
Mid-Kansas Jewish Federation

Kentucky

Jewish Family & Career Services of Louisville
Jewish Federation of Louisville
National Council of Jewish Women, Louisville Section
Ohavay Zion Synagogue

Maine

Congregation Beth El Social Action Committee

Maryland

Habonim Dror Camp Moshava
Jews United for Justice
Temple Beth Ami

Massachusetts

Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston
Jewish Family Service of Western Ma
JVS Boston
Temple Beth Shalom Tzedek
Temple Etz Chaim

Michigan

Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation
Birmingham Temple, Congregation for Humanistic Judaism
Jewish Community Relations Council/AJC - Detroit
Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor
Temple B'nai Israel

Minnesota

Jewish Community Action
Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis
Mount Zion Temple
National Council of Jewish Women, Minnesota Section

Missouri

Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis
National Council of Jewish Women-St. Louis

New Jersey

Bnai Keshet
Congregation Beth Sholom
Jewish Community Relations Council of Southern New Jersey
Jewish Family Services of Middlesex County
New Jersey Jewish Coalition for Refugees
Reform Jewish Voice of NJ
Temple Emanu-El
United Synagogue of Hoboken Refugee Support Committee

New York

Anshe Chesed
B'nai Jeshurun
Brotherhood Synagogue
Congregation Beth Elohim
Congregation Tehillah
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester
Kane Street Synagogue, Brooklyn, NY
Kolot Chayeinu / Voices of Our Lives
Lab/Shul

National Council of Jewish Women, New York State Policy Advocate
SAJ-Judaism that Stands for All
Temple Chaverim
Temple Israel of the City of New York
Village Temple
Westchester Jewish Center
Westchester Jewish Council

North Carolina

Carolina Jews for Justice
Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency
Jewish Community Refugee Initiative
Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte
Social Action Committee of Beth Meyer Synagogue
Stan Greenspon Center for Peace and Social Justice

Ohio

Jewish Community Board of Akron
Jewish Community Relations Council of Cincinnati
Jewish Family Services, Columbus

Oklahoma

Jewish Federation of Tulsa

Oregon

Jewish Community Relations Council of Portland

Pennsylvania

HIAS Pennsylvania
Jewish Community Alliance of Northeastern Pennsylvania
Jewish Federation of Greater Harrisburg
Jewish Federation of Reading
JFCS Pittsburgh
Keshet Pittsburgh
National Council of Jewish Women, Greater Philadelphia Section
Or Hadash: a Reconstructionist Congregation
Philadelphia Jewish Labor Committee

Rhode Island

Jewish Alliance of Greater Rhode Island

South Carolina

Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Charleston, Jewish Federation of Charleston,
and Charleston Jewish Family Services

Tennessee

Congregation Micah

Jewish Federation and Jewish Foundation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee
National Council of Jewish Women, Tennessee Section
The Nashville Jewish Social Justice Roundtable
West End Synagogue

Texas

Congregation Agudas Achim
Congregation Beth Israel
Jewish Family Service Houston
National Council of Jewish Women, Austin Section
Temple Beth Shalom
Texas Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC-TX)

Utah

Chavurah B'Yachad
National Council of Jewish Women, Utah Section
Utah Jews for Refugees

Virginia

Community Relations Council, United Jewish Federation of Tidewater
Congregation Ner Shalom
Congregation Or Ami
Temple Rodef Shalom
United Jewish Community of the VA Peninsula

Washington

Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue
Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle
JFS Seattle

Washington, D.C.

Fabrangen Havurah
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington
Refugee Congress, Delegate

Wisconsin

Congregation Beth Israel Sinai
Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun
Congregation Sinai
Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest
Jewish Museum Milwaukee
Milwaukee Jewish Federation Jewish Community Relations Council
National Council of Jewish Women, Milwaukee Section
Tikkun Ha-Ir of Milwaukee