



September 16, 2022

VIA EMAIL

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As leaders representing local governments around the country, we urge you to reaffirm the United States (U.S.)' longstanding commitment to refugees by at the very least:

- Maintaining the refugee admission goal for FY 2023;
- Taking all necessary steps and providing needed resources to meet this goal; and
- Strengthening other humanitarian programs to assist individuals in need of protection from disasters, conflicts, oppression, and emergencies.

As cities and counties from across the country, we are at the forefront of welcoming refugees and integrating immigrants into our communities. We know firsthand that we all benefit from the tenacity, courage, diversity, and skills that refugees bring. Welcoming them increases creativity, innovation, and economic growth in our communities.

We applaud your decision to raise the refugee cap to 125,000 for FY 2022. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)¹, currently over 100 million people have been displaced worldwide, more than any time in recorded history, with two million of them needing urgent access to resettlement this year. Given these dire circumstances, we ask that the refugee admission goal for FY 2023 be maintained at least at this current level.

¹ “More than 100 Million Now Forcibly Displaced: UNHCR Report || UN News.” *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1120542>.

While 125,000 is the highest refugee ceiling in almost 30 years, we believe this cap is not in itself sufficient unless the U.S. is able to achieve this target. Disappointingly, the U.S. resettled the lowest number of people in the history of the refugee program in FY 2021 (11,411). And while your administration set a goal of resettling 125,000 people in FY 2022, the U. S. is on pace to resettle only a fraction of that number with 12,641 refugees resettled as of May 31, 2022.

We acknowledge that the Trump Administration's drastic cuts to refugee admissions and infrastructure programs, coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, have made it challenging to expeditiously rebuild the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Nevertheless, we call on your administration to continue taking all steps necessary to expeditiously repair the damage to the resettlement program by investing sufficient resources to ensure that the number of admitted refugees for FY 2023 meets the refugee admission ceiling of 125,000.

Individuals and families fleeing wars, disasters, and emergencies often seek refuge in the U.S. through a variety of means, not just through refugee resettlement. We urge you to strengthen other forms of humanitarian protection including asylum, temporarily protected status, and humanitarian parole, and explore new ways of welcoming and easing the suffering of displaced people seeking safety in our country. These programs should be built on empathy, due process, racial equity, and our legal obligations under international agreements. We urge you to use every executive tool available to provide relief to everyone who cannot safely return to or remain in their home countries.

The U. S. has a long tradition of being a leader in refugee resettlement and providing a beacon of hope for persecuted people around the world. Welcoming refugees is not only our moral duty, but also a legal duty under our international agreements. Refugee communities have revitalized our cities and counties and created vibrant neighborhoods. Our localities are ready to partner with your administration to welcome new refugees and other newcomers and create a municipal climate where everyone can live in safety, become self-reliant, and contribute to their new communities.

Sincerely,

Mayor Eric Adams, New York, NY

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, Chicago, IL

Mayor Todd Gloria, San Diego, CA

Mayor Timothy M. Keller, Albuquerque, NM

Mayor Steve Adler, Austin, TX

Mayor Randall L. Woodfin, Birmingham, AL

Mayor Lauren McLean, Boise, ID

Mayor Michelle Wu, Boston, MA

Mayor Damon Seils, Carrboro, NC

Mayor Maria Rivera, Central Falls, RI

Mayor Pam Hemminger, Chapel Hill, NC

Mayor Patrick Wojahn, College Park, MD

Mayor Michael B. Hancock, Denver, CO

Mayor Elaine M. O'Neal, Durham, NC

Mayor John J. Bauters, Emeryville, CA

Mayor Eric Garcetti, Los Angeles, CA

Mayor Greg Fischer, Louisville, KY

Mayor James F. Kenney, Philadelphia, PA

Commissioner Susheela Jayapal, Multnomah County, OR

Mayor Libby Schaaf, Oakland, CA

Mayor Adrian O. Mapp, Plainfield, NJ

Mayor Ted Wheeler, Portland, OR

Mayor Donald Shaw, Roselle, NJ

Mayor Alan Webber, Santa Fe, NM

Mayor Bruce Harrell, Seattle, WA

County Executive Dave Somers, Snohomish County, WA

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne, Somerville, MA

Mayor James Mueller, South Bend, IN

Mayor Caroline Simmons, Stamford, CT

Mayor Ezra Nanes, State College, PA

Mayor Victoria Woodards, Tacoma, WA

Mayor Katie Rosenberg, Wausau, WI

County Supervisor Jim Provenza, Yolo County, CA

