



# Backgrounder

## Additional Points to Support COVID-19 Stimulus Package

### **Meaningful solutions to address COVID-19 must support all our neighbors, including immigrant and refugee community members.**

- Immigrants and refugees face unique challenges that were not taken into consideration in previous legislation.
- 16.7 million people in mixed-status families, as well as DACA recipients, TPS holders and undocumented workers who file taxes with a taxpayer identification number were not eligible to receive the CARES Act stimulus check.
- Our economy runs on the backs of our most vulnerable communities.
- Immigrants and refugees are vital to the U.S. labor market and fill critical jobs in the health care, manufacturing and general services industries.

## Additional Points to Support 95,000 Refugee Admissions for FY2021

### **Resettlement is a refugee's last option for safety.**

- Resettlement is the last resort, when refugees cannot safely return to their home country and when they cannot safely remain in the country to which they initially fled.
- To be considered for resettlement, a refugee must first receive a refugee status determination by the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) by proving they are fleeing persecution based on their ethnicity, nationality, religion, political opinion, or social group.
- UNHCR then refers refugees to one of 37 resettlement countries, one of which is the U.S.

### **The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is secure.**

- Resettlement is the most difficult way to enter the United States, and refugees are the most thoroughly vetted individuals in the U.S., going through all screenings before they arrive.
- Vetting includes biometric and biographic checks; interagency intelligence sharing; screenings against multiple domestic and international terrorist and criminal databases; background investigations by the FBI, Department of Defense, State Department, and National Counterterrorism Center; and in-person interviews by Homeland Security officers.

### **Refugees positively impact their new communities.**

- Refugees [give back](#) to their new communities. They start working as soon as possible, pay taxes, start businesses, and become active members of society.
- The average [workforce participation](#) rate of refugees is 81.8%, above the national 62%.
- 13% of refugees were entrepreneurs in 2015, compared to just 9% percent of the U.S.-born.
- 40% of all Fortune 500 companies were founded by refugees, immigrants or their children.

### **Resettlement is critical to U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives.**

- Resettlement must be a part of a comprehensive strategy to respond to refugee crises, promote regional stability, strengthen [U.S. national security](#), encourage other countries to take in refugees and provide humanitarian support, and demonstrate solidarity with allies including Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Kenya and other countries hosting millions of refugees.

- Resettlement is a complementary tool to humanitarian assistance, providing a measurable sign of support to host countries and a new home for the most vulnerable who will never be able to return home.

## Additional Points to Support Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program

### **Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program is necessary.**

- The URM program was originally developed in the 1980s to address the needs of thousands of children in Southeast Asia without a parent or guardian to care for them.
- Today, UNHCR estimates that over half the world's refugee population is unaccompanied refugee minors.
- Only a small fraction of refugee minors are resettled to the U.S., making the program extremely important in light of the global refugee crisis.
- Since 1980, almost 13,000 minors have entered the URM program. At its peak in 1985, ORR provided protection to 3,828 children in care.

### **Office of Refugee Resettlement URM Program extends a lifeline to children.**

- For refugee minors, the State Department identifies children overseas who are eligible for resettlement in the U.S., but do not have a parent or a relative available and committed to providing for their long-term care.
- Upon arrival in the U.S., these refugee children are placed into the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program and receive refugee foster care services and benefits.
- ORR also identifies certain minors who may become eligible for the URM program after they arrive in the United States and do not have a parent or a relative available to provide care.
- As one of two national organizations that assists URM<sup>1</sup>, LIRS bridges child welfare experience with expertise in refugee resettlement to ensure that minors with forced migration and traumatic experiences receive trauma informed wrap around services.

### **Make an exception on the moratorium on refugee flights and prioritize the resettlement of URM.**

- Currently, there are hundreds of children languishing in refugee camps overseas that have been vetted and are waiting to be resettled to the U.S., but due to the pandemic, the U.S. has stopped refugee resettlement flights.
- Children in refugee camps are vulnerable to traffickers and other dangers.
- The U.S. should include URM in the exceptions from moratorium and prioritize the resettlement of children. It is our moral and legal duty to protect the most vulnerable.

## Additional Points to Support Protection of Children Arriving at the Border

### **The CDC Order constitutes an end run around Congressionally mandated asylum protections for unaccompanied children.**

- On March 20, 2020, the CDC published an order prohibiting all “non-essential” travel at our Southern and Northern land border, purportedly, on public health grounds.

---

<sup>1</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is the other national organization that assists URM.

- In reality, the CDC order has less to do with public health and more to do with the administration's efforts to deter asylum seekers and unaccompanied children from seeking asylum.
- Public health officials have said that there is no "no public health rationale for denying admission to individuals based on legal status" in a [letter](#) to the Trump Administration.
- The CDC order was extended on April 20, 2020 for an additional 30-days. And on May 20, 2020, the CDC Order was extended indefinitely.
- The CDC Order is being used to deny asylum seekers and unaccompanied children their lawful right to seek asylum and has ostensibly ended asylum at the border.
- Although the CBP has broad discretionary powers and may allow asylum seekers and unaccompanied children into the country, it chooses not to.
- Only 2 individuals out of thousands that have arrived at the border since March have been allowed to seek asylum in the U.S.

**Expelling unaccompanied children from the U.S. during COVID-19 is cruel and unlawful.**

- We are a nation that prides itself on human rights and rule of law. Protecting children is not at odds with protecting our border.
- The CDC Order should not be; and yet it is being applied over and above the TVPRA and our domestic and international legal protections for asylum seekers.
- Children are vulnerable and warrant special protections that are provided for in the Flores Settlement Agreement and William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPRA 2008).
- Approximately 1,000 unaccompanied children have been rapidly expelled from the U.S. border.
- For some children, expulsions are a death sentence because they are returned to the threats and dangers that they fled from.
- Ironically, the May 20, 2020, CDC Order stipulates that there are safety measures that CBP could take to protect children and border patrol staff.
- Although unaccompanied children arrive at the border alone, many have families they can reunify within the United States.
- Rather than implement safety measures or facilitate family reunifications, the CBP has opted to expel children. This is cruel and unconscionable. America can do better.
- We are a nation that prides itself for having high moral standards and family values, not for a few, but for ALL.
- Central American children and families flee to the Southern Border in search of safety and protection- not because our laws are loopholes.

**Root causes force people to flee to the southern border.**

- Children and families from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala continue to flee their communities due to violence and other harm.
- For nations not at war, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala have some of the highest murder rates in the world. El Salvador ranks number one.
- These countries are some of the most dangerous countries to be if you are a woman or child due to high rates of domestic and gang violence and few, if any, protections available to victims.