



# A LETTER FROM LIRS LEADERSHIP

**This year marked an incredible milestone for Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: 80 years of serving the most vulnerable.** When we began our work of welcome back in 1939, resettling Lutherans persecuted by the Nazi regime during World War II, we couldn't have imagined where we'd be today - helping immigrants from around the world.

Our 80th anniversary affords us a chance to reflect. There's no denying that 2019 has been a difficult year for immigrants and refugees in the United States due to policy changes, travel restrictions, and lowered admissions. But it has been heartening in many ways, too. In the midst of the darkest days, we've seen thousands of people from communities and congregations across the country express their support for their migrant neighbors.

Today, LIRS remains committed to our Biblical mandate to "welcome the stranger" (Mt 25:35). In the past year, we have helped more than 5,000 refugees start new lives in the United States. We have created educational and career opportunities for immigrant youth. We have offered support for migrant children and families in detention, continued our family reunification efforts, and expanded our capacity to help unaccompanied minors find safe and loving homes.

It has been incredibly moving to see individuals, congregations, corporate partners, and local communities step up throughout our history. You've made a difference in the lives of refugees and immigrants through donations, advocacy, prayer, volunteer engagement, and so much more. The compassion and kindness of our supporters are not only a testament to faith, but also to essential humanity and the inherent dignity of all people.

Again, thank you for supporting our long welcome. **We look forward to the next 80 years.**

*Bishop Michael Rinehart*

*Board Chair*

*Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service*

*Krish O'Mara Vignarajah*

*President & CEO*

*Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service*



# INTRODUCING...

## KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH

In 2019, LIRS was proud to welcome Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, former Policy Director to First Lady Michelle Obama, as President and Chief Executive Officer.

Since our founding in 1939, LIRS has worked to uphold the uniquely American ideal that welcoming immigrants from across the globe with open arms is essential to our nation's progress and prosperity. Krish's embodiment of these timeless American values inspired LIRS to appoint a next-generation leader—the second refugee and first non-Lutheran in our 80-year history—to advance efforts to protect the rights of and create opportunities for vulnerable refugees and migrants.

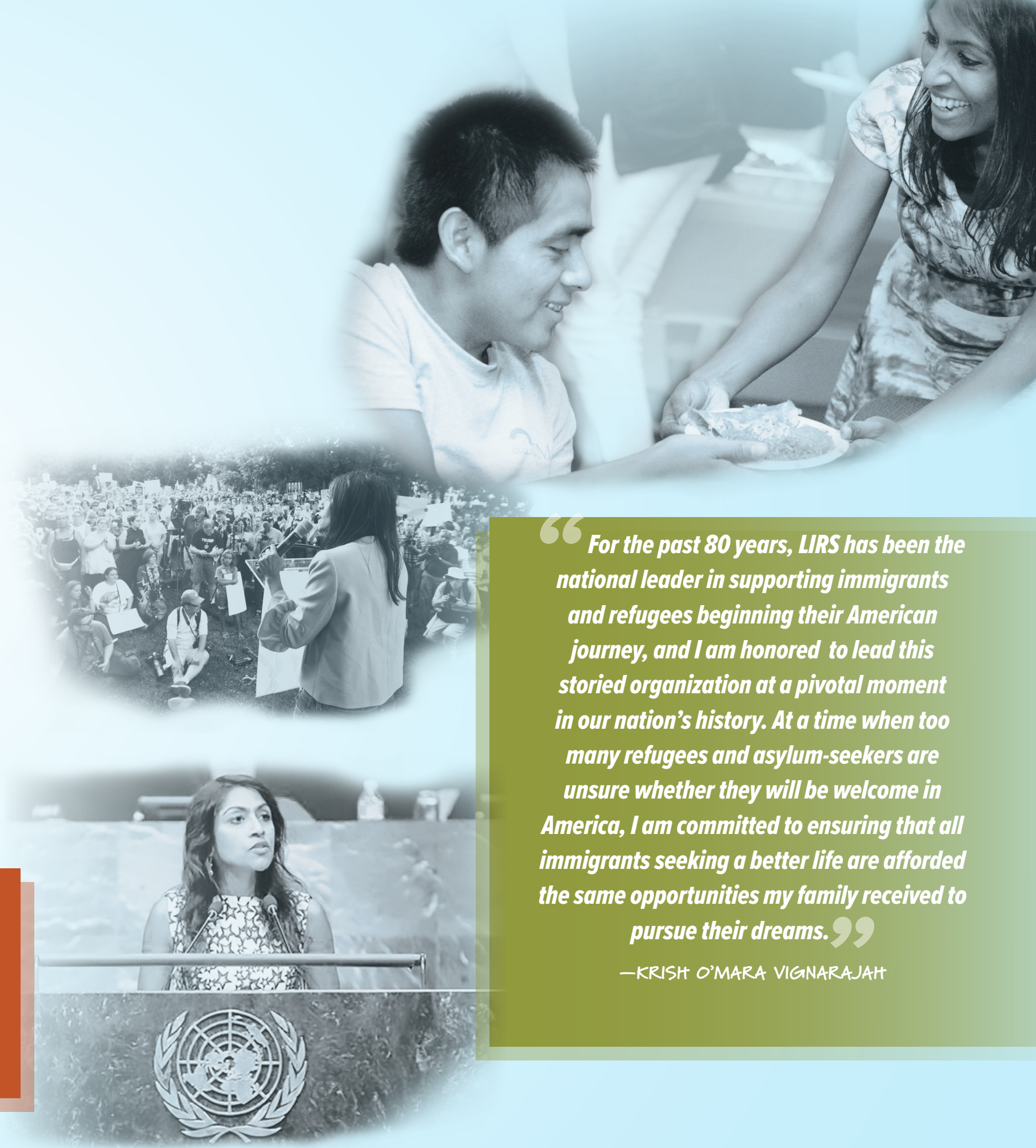
Krish has committed her career to public service because she knows how differently life could have turned out. She was just nine months old when she and her family escaped a country on the brink of civil war and built a life in Maryland. Her parents came to this country with no jobs and \$200 in their pockets, and yet she went on to attend Yale College, where she earned a Master's degree in Political Science and a B.S. in Molecular, Cellular & Developmental Biology. She was a Marshall Scholar at Oxford University, where she received an

M.Phil. in International Relations, before returning to Yale Law School, where she served on the Yale Law Journal.

At the White House, Krish served as Policy Director for Michelle Obama and led the First Lady's signature Let Girls Learn initiative. At the State Department, she coordinated development and implementation of multiple programs including those concerning refugees and migration, engagement with religious communities, the legal dimensions of U.S. foreign policy, and regional issues relating to Africa and the Middle East. She worked closely with the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Consular Affairs, Health & Human Services and the Department of Defense.

Krish practiced law at Jenner & Block in Washington, DC, clerked for Chief Judge Michael Boudin on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, and taught at Georgetown University as an adjunct.

Krish and her husband, Collin O'Mara, are the parents of a young daughter, Alana.



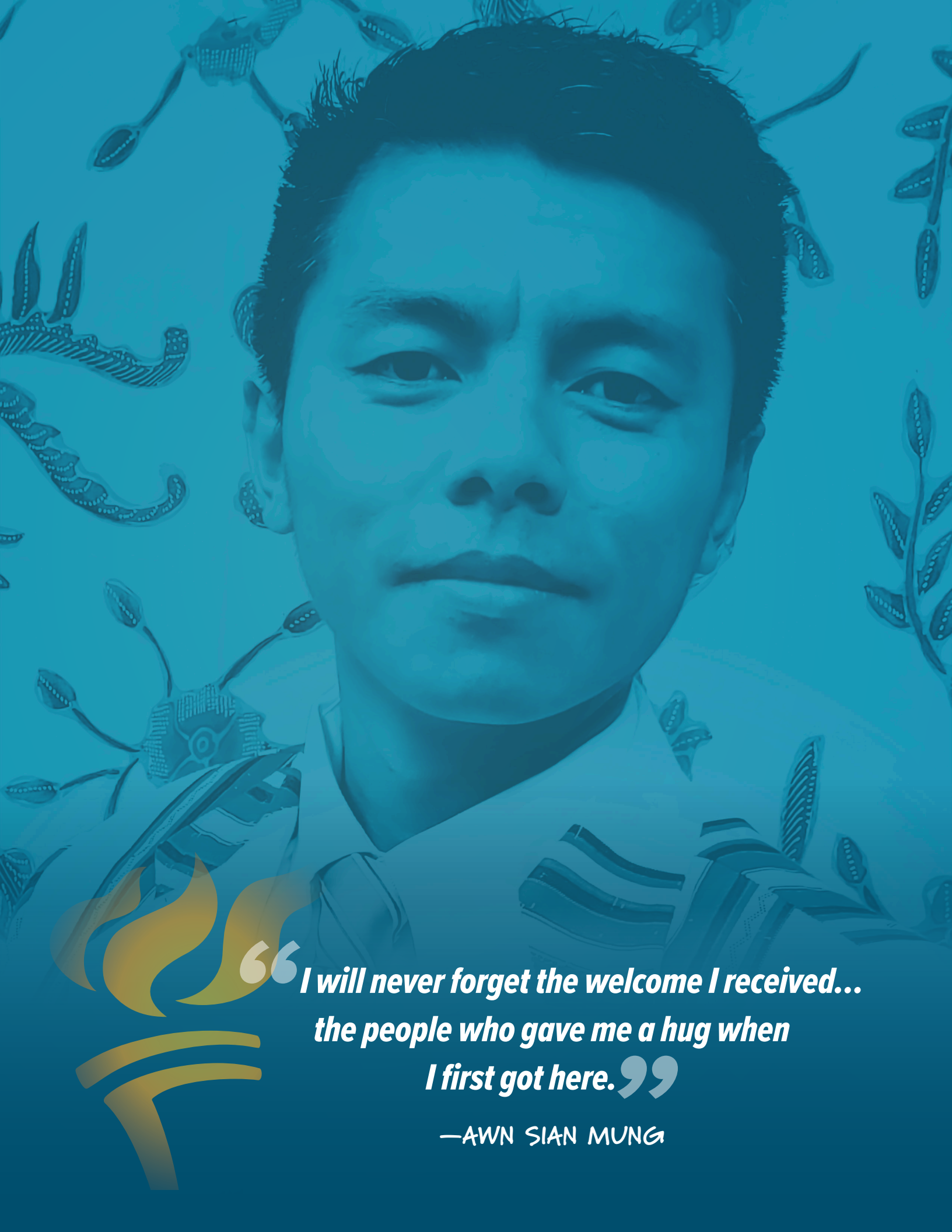
**“As an immigrant who fled a civil war and went on to serve in the State Department, Obama White House, and across Maryland, Krish uniquely understands the challenges and opportunities facing refugees and asylum-seekers. She will be a tireless champion for all who seek a better life.”**

—U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN

**“For the past 80 years, LIRS has been the national leader in supporting immigrants and refugees beginning their American journey, and I am honored to lead this storied organization at a pivotal moment in our nation's history. At a time when too many refugees and asylum-seekers are unsure whether they will be welcome in America, I am committed to ensuring that all immigrants seeking a better life are afforded the same opportunities my family received to pursue their dreams.”**

—KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH

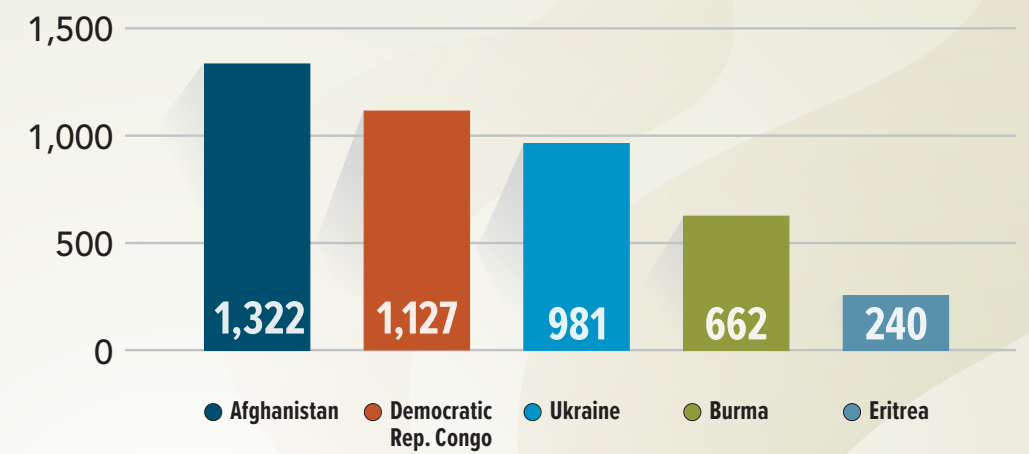




“I will never forget the welcome I received...  
the people who gave me a hug when  
I first got here.”  
—AWN SIAN MUNG

# REFUGEE AND MIGRANT SERVICES

FY 2019 Top Countries of Origin



In 2019, the refugee admissions ceiling was set at **30,000**, a record low. Still, LIRS resettled **5,045** people.

REFUGEES 75% (3,802)

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT  
VISA HOLDERS 24% (1,243)

UNACCOMPANIED  
REFUGEE MINORS 1% (94)



“I think the bottom line is  
that people need to realize that  
everybody is human, everybody  
has a family, and everybody has  
an immigration story.”

—DELIA GARCIA, FORMER KANSAS  
SECRETARY OF LABOR

## SPOTLIGHT: BORDER RESPONSE

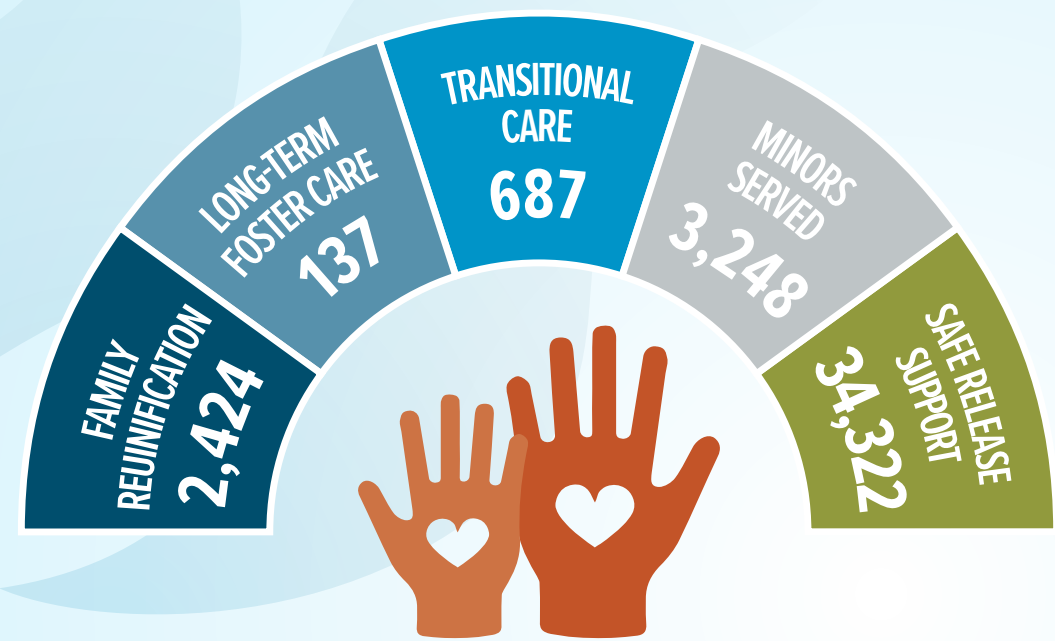
The Respite and Welcome program was initiated as an emergency mobilization in response to the increasing number of asylum seekers being released on the streets in late 2018. The program began in January 2019 through coordination of faith communities, nonprofits, government agencies, local businesses, and concerned citizens to provide essential services to asylum seekers as they transitioned to their families across the United States.

## SPOTLIGHT: MY AMERICA

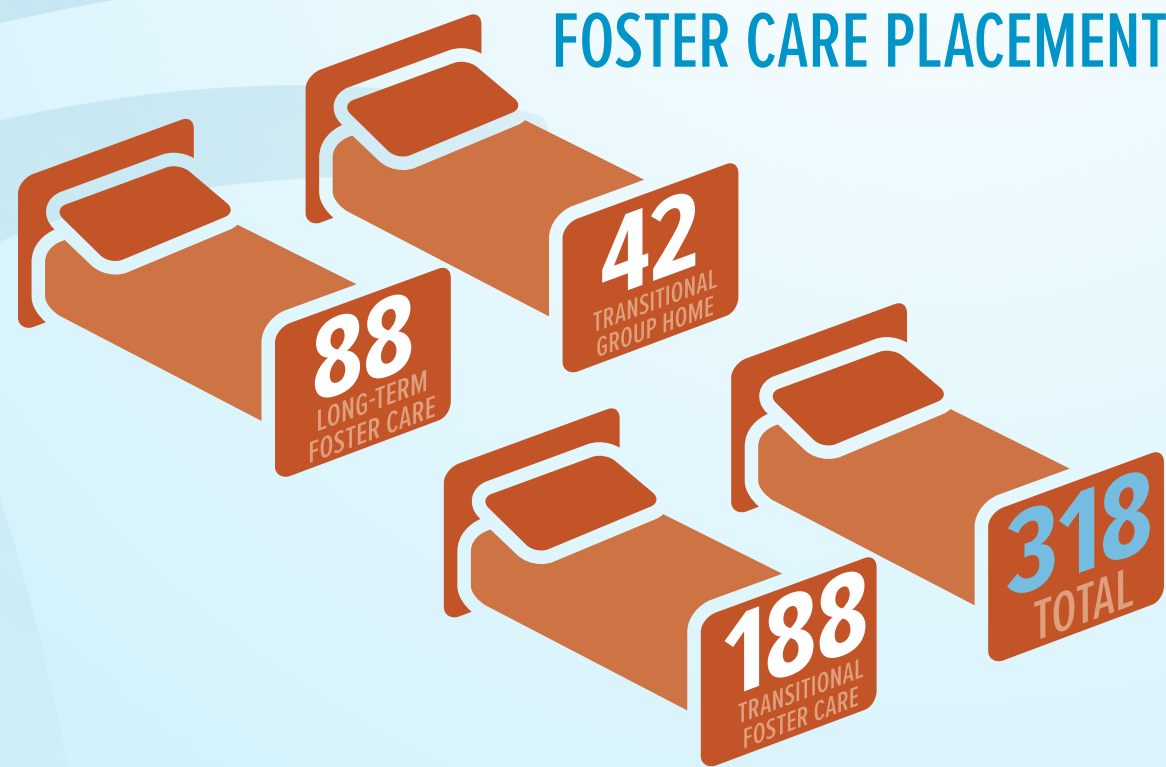
In January 2019, LIRS launched the My America campaign to lift up the voices of refugees, migrants, and those working in the refugee resettlement and immigration systems. In a time where our newsfeeds are flooded with discouraging headlines about immigrants, this campaign offers an alternative vision for an America that embraces all those seeking protection.

# CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

## CHILDREN SERVED



## FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS



*“For over eight years, I’ve worked to serve unaccompanied kids and families at LIRS. And in that time, the road that our families have had to walk has never been easy. But it’s been a lot harder over the past few years.*

*I’ll never forget Junior. He was three years old – like my own son. He had been separated from his dad and sent to transitional foster care until we could reunite him. I had the rare opportunity to be there on the day he was reunited with his dad. And I remember Junior running to him, throwing his arms around his neck, and holding him so tightly. When I left them, Junior was still holding on to his dad’s neck. That child was not going to let go of his dad. Not for all the money in the world.*

*Sometimes it feels like we’ve lost our way, but I still have hope. I remember that some day, I will reflect on this difficult time for our country with my sons. And when that day dawns and America’s light shines once again as a beacon of compassion and protection, I will remember Junior.”*

*—GINNY FITCHETT,  
LIRS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION*



# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHTS

## Workforce Development

### The New American Pathways Program (NAP)

In partnership with the Walmart Foundation and Latter-day Saint Charities, LIRS provides career upskilling and advancement to refugees and other immigrants around the country, allowing them to move from 'survival' jobs into meaningful careers.

**The Refugee Youth Career Pathways (RYCP)** program provides refugee youth (ages 16-24) with the professional skills and opportunities needed to expand their access to meaningful employment.

Refugee Youth Career Pathways is made possible in part by generous support from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, The Starbucks Foundation, and WeWork.



***Irina is an immigrant from Honduras, where she worked as a teacher. When she enrolled in the NAP program, she was working nights as a custodian. Her goal was to work with children again. Through NAP, Irina completed an ESL for Education course and received a Childhood Development Associate certification. In December, she got a better-paying job in childcare and was able to leave her job as a custodian.***

## Hope for the Holidays

In 2019, Hope for the Holidays celebrated five years of providing hope for families impacted by immigration detention. Each year, communities from across the United States write Christmas cards and raise money to buy gifts for children in detention.

**14,137** cards sent

**1,512** gifts donated  
(enough for every single child in detention!)

**\$30,382** raised for  
asylum seekers

**35** states and Washington, DC  
participated in the campaign

- LIRS distributed cards to **41** organizations across the country
- For the first time, we sent more than **3,000** cards across the border to those impacted by the Remain in Mexico Policy

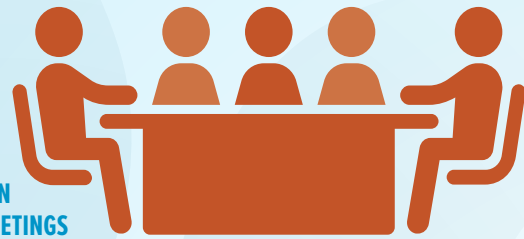




# ADVOCACY

42

REFUGEE AND  
MIGRANT LEADERS IN  
CONGRESSIONAL MEETINGS



56

VISITS TO  
CONGRESSIONAL  
OFFICES FOR  
WORLD REFUGEE DAY

18



BILLS ENDORSED

## Highlights

At the invitation of Senator Markey (D-MA.), LIRS President Krish O'Mara Vignarajah met with four members of the Senate Climate Change Taskforce to discuss protections for climate-displaced persons and the role of the U.S. in promoting climate resilience abroad.

On **July 24**, Krish testified before the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee hearing on "Oversight of the Unaccompanied Children Program: Ensuring the Safety of Children in HHS Care," and drafted and submitted a written statement.

On **March 14**, advocacy staff held "Insights from the Field: A Congressional Briefing on Refugee Resettlement" for members of Congress and their staff.

On **August 8**, LIRS conducted a webinar to mobilize our network to take action to advocate for a higher refugee admissions goal in FY2020.



## Taking Our Mission to Court

On November 21, LIRS joined forces with HIAS and Church World Service (CWS) to challenge the Trump administration's executive order giving state and local officials authority to block refugee resettlement in their jurisdictions. This unprecedented order could prevent refugees who have waited for years to be reunited with their U.S.-based families and prohibit communities from welcoming refugees, even if they have long-standing and successful resettlement programs. The lawsuit was a success: A federal judge issued an injunction blocking the executive order in January 2020.

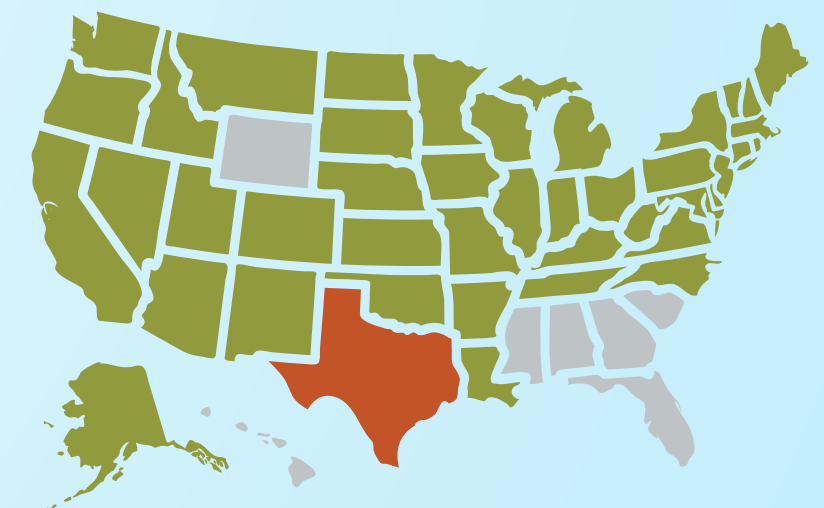
*"Imagine coming to this country after years of violence, persecution and desperation, only to be told you cannot join your family because the state or city must clear new political hurdles in order to welcome you. Imagine being part of a welcoming community – where both the local economy and its cultural heritage are bolstered by the presence of refugees – only to have the door slammed shut by xenophobic and bureaucratic confusion. This dystopian vision could become our American reality if this unconstitutional executive order is allowed to stand."*

– KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH, LIRS PRESIDENT AND CEO

LIRS worked tirelessly to contact state and local leaders to stand for welcome. **42** governors and **100+** local officials expressed their commitment to resettling refugees, as well as thousands of supporters from communities and congregations around the country.

## Refugee Resettlement Consent By State

● Consent Refused  
● Consent Granted



LIRS' successful challenge to the executive order was featured in media outlets across the country, including:

The Washington Post The New York Times npr CNN

# FINANCES FOR 2019

## Statement of Financial Position

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2019

Dollars in thousands

<b>ASSETS</b>	
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$18,805
U.S. Government Receivable	\$5,305
Other Assets	\$3,417
Investment in Lutheran Center Corp.	\$3,388
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<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$30,915</b>
 <b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	
Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses	\$9,516
Long-term Debt	\$2,095
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<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$11,611</b>
 <b>NET ASSETS</b>	
Without Donor Restrictions	\$18,653
With Donor Restrictions	\$651
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<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$19,304</b>
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<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$30,915</b>

## Statement of Activities & Changes in Net Assets

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2019

Dollars in thousands

<b>SUPPORT &amp; REVENUE</b>	
Contributions - Private Sources	\$8,417
U.S. Government and State	\$52,109
Fees and Other Revenue	\$2,600
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<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>\$63,126</b>
 <b>Expenses</b>	
Program Services	\$52,653
Management and General	\$4,048
Fundraising	\$1,142
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<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$57,843</b>
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<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$5,283</b>
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<b>Net Assets, Beginning of Year</b>	<b>\$14,021</b>
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<b>NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$19,304</b>

# LIRS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- REV. MICHAEL RINEHART** (Houston, TX)  
Board Chair
- MRS. LINDA STOTERAU** (Orange, CA)  
Vice Chair
- DENNIS WEICKERT** (Alpharetta, GA)  
Board Treasurer
- MR. EVAN MOILAN** (Bastrop, TX)  
Board Secretary
- MS. JUDY BENKE** (Oakland Gardens, NY)  
Executive Member at Large

## AT-LARGE MEMBERS

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- MS. SELENA BESIREVIC** — Denver, CO
- MR. TED GOINS** — Lutheran Services Carolinas, Salisbury, NC
- MS. VIRGINIA HULTQUIST** — Thrivent Financial, Greensboro, NC
- MR. RANDEL K. JOHNSON** — Seyfarth Shaw LLC, Washington D.C.
- MR. JOHN MOELLER** — Inspiritus (formerly Lutheran Services of Georgia), Atlanta, GA
- MR. CARLOS PEÑA** — Kleen Supply Company, Galveston, TX
- MR. DUSTIN PLANTHOLT** — OptiMed Health Plans, Sparks, MD
- DR. DIANA POHLE** — Jazz Pharmaceuticals, San Jose, CA
- MR. EDDIE RESENDE** – World Trade Center Institute, Baltimore, MD
- MS. EVELYN SOTO** — Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago IL
- MS. ELIZABETH WAGNER** – Bryn Mawr Trust Company, Princeton Junction, NJ





**Lutheran Immigration  
and Refugee Service**

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