

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We respectfully ask that you issue an updated presidential determination with an increased refugee admissions target for the remainder of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 as soon as possible. Furthermore, we urge you to set a target of at least 125,000 refugee admissions in FY 2022.

We welcome your Administration's announcement that you intend to establish a final increased refugee admissions target for the remainder of this fiscal year by May 15, 2021. We urge you to set the refugee admissions target at 62,500 for this fiscal year, as your Administration proposed to Congress in February.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were more than 80 million people displaced worldwide in 2020, a record high. Among this displaced population are 26 million refugees – the highest number in history – half of whom are children. UNHCR estimates that 1.4 million refugees are in urgent need of resettlement. Only a tiny percentage of refugees are permanently resettled each year.

The United States must reject the previous Administration's cruel legacy of anti-refugee policies and return to our longstanding bipartisan tradition of providing safety to the world's most vulnerable refugees. Prior to the previous Administration, the refugee admissions ceiling had averaged 95,000 per year and had never been set below 67,000. The U.S. had resettled an average of over 80,000 refugees per year since 1980 until the Trump Administration. The U.S. admitted more than 100,000 refugees during each year of President George H.W. Bush's presidency. Even after the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush set the refugee admissions target at 70,000, and the U.S. admitted more than 27,000 refugees in FY 2002.

Under the previous Administration, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) suffered from four consecutive years of dramatic decreases in refugee resettlement, resulting in reduced capacity in our refugee resettlement infrastructure. We acknowledge the challenges you inherited with USRAP, and we strongly support the rebuilding and strengthening of USRAP.

We were pleased to see your commitment to rebuilding USRAP as part of your Administration's FY 2022 budget proposal. Rebuilding our refugee infrastructure is critical for providing safety for people fleeing war and persecution, including for vulnerable Central Americans seeking safety. Restoring USRAP will strengthen our ability to protect the most vulnerable refugees from conflicts all over the world, including in our geographic region.

Refugees are the most thoroughly vetted travelers to our country and can wait for years before they are resettled here. As of March 31, 2021, only 2,050 refugees had been resettled in

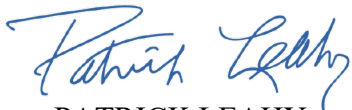
the United States this fiscal year. More than 35,000 refugees have reportedly been screened and preliminarily approved by the Department of Homeland Security for resettlement in the U.S. We urge you to expeditiously and safely admit all qualified refugees who are waiting to be resettled. We urge you to set a robust increased target for USRAP as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator



PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator



PATTY MURRAY
United States Senator



JACK REED
United States Senator



BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
United States Senator



AMY KLOBUCHAR
United States Senator



JEANNE SHAHEEN
United States Senator



CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator



DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator



RON WYDEN
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper
THOMAS R. CARPER
United States Senator



SHERROD BROWN
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SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
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MARK R. WARNER
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JEFFREY A. MERKLEY
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TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono
MAZIE K. HIRONO
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RAPHAEL WARNOCK
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