



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

207 STATE HOUSE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

JB PRITZKER
GOVERNOR

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Honorable Secretary Pompeo,

Since 1975, the State of Illinois has welcomed and resettled more than 130,000 refugees from more than 86 countries. In recent years, 1,000 to 3,000 refugees, those seeking asylum, and victims of human trafficking arrived in Illinois annually. Refugees have successfully rebuilt their lives and made positive social and economic contributions to Illinois. They have helped revitalize neighborhoods and added to the cultural vitality of our state and communities.

As the Governor of Illinois and the great-grandson of refugees, I am committed to ensuring that Illinois is a welcoming state, especially for refugees and those seeking asylum. As survivors of persecution, refugees embody the importance of human rights, democracy, and freedom. Refugees' resilience in the face of hardship inspires courage, hope, and perseverance. And refugees' countless contributions undoubtedly make our states and nation stronger.

Importantly, refugees admitted through the United States must go through extensive security screening prior to their arrival. This process ensures that their claims are valid and that they are not a security risk to the United States. The security vetting can last more than two years and includes five background checks, four biometric security checks, and multiple interviews with United States officials. Once admitted to the United States, refugees are required to become self-sufficient and integrated into their new communities as soon as possible.

The New American Economy's report [*From Struggle to Resilience, the Economic Impact of Refugees in America*](#) and the National Bureau of Economic Research's report [*The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the U.S.*](#) have documented that:

- Refugees pay \$21,000 more in taxes than they receive in benefits on average in their first 20 years in the U.S.
- Refugee rates of entrepreneurship (15%) exceed other immigrants (11.5%) as well as U.S. born (9%).



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- Refugees become citizens at a higher rate than non-refugee immigrants. In 2015, 84% of eligible refugees were naturalized citizens as compared to 51% of other immigrants.
- Refugee children do as well as U.S.-born children on measures of education attainment.
- Over 77% of refugees are of working age as compared to 49.7% of the U.S.-born population, helping to meet U.S. labor force needs.

Illinois communities have clearly benefited from having refugees in our midst. We coordinate with the U.S. State Department and the Office of Refugee Resettlement, as well as the non-profit sector, to make sure that local communities are consulted and engaged in an on-going, positive effort to welcome refugees and ensure that refugees can realize their full potential in our country.

With a global humanitarian crisis of more than 70 million forcibly displaced individuals, including 25 million who are refugees seeking asylum, the United States should continue to provide leadership, in partnership with other countries, to offer resettlement for refugees. Our nation has the capacity to admit significantly more than the 18,000-person limit set by the presidential determination for FY20. I believe it is in our national interest and consistent with our national values to do so.

As the Governor of Illinois, I proudly consent to the continuation of refugee admission to our state and extend a warm welcome to refugees who have come and will be coming to Illinois.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JB Pritzker".

JB Pritzker
Governor