



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Ralph S. Northam
Governor

November 25, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington D.C., 20520

Via Electronic Mail

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

I have read federal Executive Order 13888, and I write to reaffirm Virginia's position that we welcome refugee resettlement in the Commonwealth.

Virginia has welcomed refugees who are fleeing war, persecution, or other dire circumstances. We know that no one chooses to abandon their home until conditions become so difficult that the unknown is preferable.

The United States has long presented itself as a haven, a place of stability and economic prosperity. We promote the ideals upon which this country was founded, of liberty and freedom. But to uphold those ideals abroad, we must allow access to them here at home. We must practice what we preach.

Virginia helps refugees settle into new homes only in those localities that participate in the Virginia Community Capacity Initiative, which ensures that a community's elected officials, faith leaders, schools, and other stakeholders are committed to helping refugees build new homes and lives. We work with resettlement agencies that have deep ties to these communities. We have always been clear that successful resettlement only happens with community involvement.

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo

Page 2

November 25, 2019

Because of our proximity to Washington, D.C., we are a preferred location for many Special Immigrant Visa holders: Iraqi and Afghanistan refugees who provided services to the U.S. military in those countries, and whose lives and families are in danger because of that service.

In recent years, as the federal government has lowered the number of refugees accepted into the United States, Virginia's refugee number has dropped. We have the capacity to accept and help more refugees than we currently have.

These are people who no longer have a home. History shows us that this could happen to any of us. We must all imagine ourselves in their shoes, and treat them as we would wish to be treated. If I were ever in such a position, I hope a friendly country would take me in and let me rebuild my life in peace and safety. I believe people of decency would share that hope. Virginia's lights are on and our doors are open, and we welcome new Virginians to make their homes here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. S. Northam', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ralph S. Northam

cc: Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Carol T. O'Connell
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
U.S. Department of State