

JAY INSLEE
Governor



STATE OF WASHINGTON
Office of the Governor

November 5, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20230

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LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

RE: Consent for Refugee Resettlement Pursuant to Executive Order 13888

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

I write to affirm that the State of Washington wholeheartedly consents to welcoming and resettling refugees into our communities — a long and proud tradition that we intend to continue.

As the state that resettled the second highest number of refugees last year, we are honored to remain a place of safety and security for those fleeing persecution and violence. Since 1975, Washington has brought in nearly 150,000 refugees from 70 different countries, including Vietnam, Ukraine, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Refugees contribute to all sectors of our economy — as teachers, service members, doctors, and more — while adding to our rich cultural landscape. They are an integral part of Washington's past, present, and future.

Just last week, we celebrated the success of Dr. Anisa Ibrahim, a Washingtonian who resettled in our state after fleeing war-torn Somalia more than two decades ago. Only six years old when her family first arrived to the United States, Dr. Ibrahim later graduated from the University of Washington Medical School and now leads a pediatric clinic in Seattle — the same clinic that treated her when she and her siblings were children.

Her story is not unique. Throughout our state, children and families speak of similar circumstances, of having sacrificed everything to seek refuge in America from violence, starvation, and other horrors most of us will thankfully never experience. Many of those children are now leaders in our communities, bringing with them their unique perspectives on tragedy, perseverance, and triumph. Washington State is stronger and our communities are richer because of their important contributions.

Given all of the benefits of a robust resettlement program, we should not cast aside our founding principles as a nation. Enshrined on the Statue of Liberty, the "Mother of Exiles," is our



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country's commitment as a safe place for humanity's most vulnerable. Lest we forget that, of the 26,000,000 refugees worldwide, more than half are children.

For these reasons, I ask that our state be allowed to accept at least as many refugees as we have in prior years, and should other states be unable or unwilling to accept refugee families into their jurisdictions, they will be welcomed here in Washington State.

I remain troubled by this Administration's deep cuts to refugee resettlement and disappointed that my call for a considerably higher number of refugees went unanswered. I hope you will recognize the success of our efforts in the coming year when your administration revisits the refugee cap for 2021.

Further, I have significant concerns about the imposition of written consent requirements upon states and local jurisdictions as a condition to receiving new refugees for resettlement through the U.S. Department of State's Reception and Placement Program. We will be working with our localities to ensure that they understand the written consent required of them under EO 13888, and to ensure uninterrupted refugee resettlement in Washington State, but we reserve the right to challenge the EO 13888 requirements in the future.

Very truly yours,



Jay Inslee
Governor

CC: Casey Katims, Director, Washington, D.C. Office, Governor Jay Inslee
Carol T. O'Connell, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population,
Refugees, and Migration
Sarah Peterson, Chief, Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance, Washington State
Department of Social and Health Services