



SENATOR LUZ ESCAMILLA
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UTAH STATE SENATE

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August 16, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Madam Secretary:

Welcoming refugees shines a light on Americans' most cherished common values. In Salt Lake City, Utah, we have seen first-hand the welcoming and generous spirit that is so prevalent among the people of this great state. Since 1994, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and other resettlement agencies have worked in Utah to help newcomers from around the world who have escaped life-threatening circumstances to begin building new lives for themselves and their families. Over 65,000 resilient new Utahns have proven to be an asset to their new communities since our state began resettling refugees. This achievement was brought about through the work of over 5,000 volunteers stepping forward in Salt Lake City, in the last two years alone. These volunteers are working to support new Americans in receiving sanctuary and finding opportunities to rebuild their lives and thrive as new Americans.

Refugees are forced to flee their homes because they face persecution because of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Over 65 million people are displaced globally, the largest displacement crisis in recorded history, including over 22 million refugees. Resettlement offers a chance for less than 1% of the world's refugees to reach safety in a third country when no other options remain.

Resettlement to the United States is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection and takes place after eligible refugees undergo rigorous selection, security vetting and medical screening processes. Upon arrival, organizations like the IRC and community partners help refugees in Utah by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing; job placement and employment skills; English-language classes; and cultural orientation.

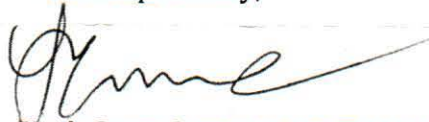
I am writing today to urge your administration to continue to resettle refugees in our great country and to honor the 45,000 admissions ceiling in 2019. Utah has demonstrated the

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economic and social benefits of being a welcoming state to refugees and new Americans. Refugee families are opening businesses, paying taxes, and becoming integral parts of our communities. Innovative programs such as IRC's Spice Kitchen Incubator identify potential entrepreneurs who then receive the training and tools necessary to turn their culture and cuisine into successful business that add value to our community and allow these refugees to give back to the nation that welcomed them. These efforts represent America at it's very best.

If you have any questions about the status of our work in Salt Lake City, Utah or if there is any other way we can be of assistance please do not hesitate to reach out. I may be reached at lescamilla@le.utah.gov or 801-550-6434.

Most respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luz Escamilla', written in a cursive style.

Utah State Senator Luz Escamilla

UTAH STATE SENATE



SENATOR LUZ ESCAMILLA
MINORITY ASSISTANT WHIP

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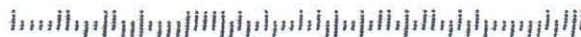


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The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016

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U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

November 1, 2018

The Honorable Luz Escamilla
Utah State Senate
350 North State Street, Suite 320
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114

Dear Ms. Escamilla:

Thank you for your August 16, 2018 letter. Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf.

As you express in your letter, the U.S. Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) has a long history of resettling refugees in the United States and reflects this country's highest values and aspirations of compassion, generosity, and leadership. It is important to note, however, that its support of refugees extends beyond the refugee admissions program. Our response encompasses a broad protection-based immigration structure including the asylum program and generous humanitarian assistance overseas.

On October 4, 2018, the President signed the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 and set the refugee admissions ceiling at 30,000. The ceiling takes into account the operational realities associated with security measures to protect national security and public safety, as well as the need to conduct credible fear screenings of aliens seeking asylum at our borders and address the backlog of affirmative asylum cases, which stands at about 320,000 (approximately 492,000 individuals), the highest since 2002.

As you may be aware, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, together with the Department of State, law enforcement, and the intelligence community, has worked very hard in recent years to analyze the USRAP and introduce new measures to make the program more secure and enhance national security. The implementation of new security vetting procedures, while necessary, has lengthened processing times for some cases and slowed admissions in FY 2018. We anticipate that this is a temporary impact and that over time, as we and our vetting partners adjust to these changes and address resources constraints, the process will speed up.

We appreciate your comments regarding the positive contributions refugees have made to your state. Thank you again for your letter and your state's commitment to refugee resettlement. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Francis Cissna".

L. Francis Cissna
Director