March 15, 2016

Chairman Goodlatte
House Judiciary Committee
2309 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Conyers
House Judiciary Committee
2426 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers:

The undersigned 234 organizations strongly oppose H.R. 4731, the “Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act of 2016.” This proposed legislation would dismantle the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, which has been a critical humanitarian and diplomacy tool for over three decades. With more than 60 million refugees and displaced people around the world, it is critically important that the U.S. demonstrates global leadership by welcoming refugees. Enacting legislation that would send the message that refugees are not welcome here is a sharp departure from our nation’s character as a beacon of freedom and our history as a country founded by refugees and immigrants.

This Act would hinder U.S. foreign policy objectives and undermine humanitarian assistance. It proposes to cap the number of refugees resettled in the U.S. at 60,000 per year, despite the President's determination that 85,000 should be admitted in Fiscal Year 2016. Importantly, it would take away the President’s authority to set the number of refugees who may enter the country per year.

H.R. 4731 would require the U.S. to prioritize resettlement of religious minorities above all other refugees, including those who fear persecution based on their race, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. It also undermines the integrity of the program, which resettles refugees based on vulnerability, not a hierarchy of human rights.

This Act would allow state and local governments to “veto” refugee resettlement in their communities, opening the door for discrimination against refugees; it is also potentially an unconstitutional delegation of federal power, creating a patchwork of refugee policies across the country. This outcome would be detrimental both to refugees' successful integration and to communities receiving them.

H.R. 4731 would further allow refugees to be placed under continual surveillance after their arrival, which would codify discrimination against refugees and raise serious privacy concerns. The current vetting process for refugees is incredibly rigorous and includes screening by U.S. federal law enforcement and national security agencies. It is simply un-American to treat persecuted individuals, who want nothing more than to start a new life in safe and welcoming communities, as criminals.
The Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act would automatically revoke the refugee status of any refugee who returns to his or her country of origin. Sometimes refugees risk their lives to return home to see a dying or sick loved one for the last time. These individuals, who have endured such trauma and still risk their own safety to care for loved ones, should not be in fear of having their protection revoked due to traveling home.

Furthermore, H.R. 4731 creates unnecessary and expensive burdens on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The legislation would require an interview with DHS before a refugee can adjust to lawful permanent residency in the U.S. and would require refugees to provide evidence that they still meet the refugee definition at the time of adjustment. DHS already has the authority to require such an interview when it determines one is needed. The time and money that would be required to implement these changes can be more responsibly spent.

The Act also imposes redundant anti-fraud measures that would create additional costs for DHS and life-threatening delays in the resettlement process for refugee applicants. The U.S. refugee program already has abundant security measures to safeguard our nation’s security.

Finally, the Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act would establish undue hardship on refugees by delaying their ability to adjust to lawful permanent resident status from one year, under current law, to three years. This would be extremely counterproductive to refugee integration, employment, and self-sufficiency.

This Act would punish vulnerable refugees because it would make the process more complicated and create further delays, when refugees are already the most vetted people to come to the U.S. Passage of this Act would also send a message that refugees who have survived years of persecution and trauma and who are already woven into the fabric of U.S. communities are not welcome here. We oppose H.R. 4731 so that we may continue our country’s proud tradition of protecting and welcoming vulnerable and persecuted people from around the world.

Thank you for your consideration to this very important matter.

Sincerely,

National/International Organizations
African American Ministers In Action
Alliance for Citizenship
Alliance of Baptists
Ameinu (Our People)
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
American Friends Service Committee
American Immigration Lawyers Association
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church in North America
Oxfam America
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Provincial Council of the School Sisters of the Notre Dame Central Pacific Province
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities
Save the Children
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, USA Province
Spanish Education for Women
Survivors of Torture, International
Syria Relief and Development
Transgender Law Center
T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Justice
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
United Church of Christ Wider Church Ministries
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Union for Reform Judaism
Uri L’Tzedek (Orthodox Jewish Social Justice)
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
Win Without War
Women's Refugee Commission

Alabama
Greater Birmingham Ministries

Alaska
Catholic Social Services

Arizona
St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

California
African Advocacy Network
API Legal Outreach
Apoyo Legal Migrante Asociado
Armenian Relief Society Social Services
Asian Health Services
Asian Law Alliance
Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach
Asociacion de Liderazgo Comunitario
The Bread Project
The Bridge of Life
Building Home Together
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The Cathedral of the Rockies
First United Methodist Church, Cathedral of the Rockies
Global Community Partners
Heart Fire Inst Intermountain Fair Housing Council, Inc.
Intermountain Fair Housing Council, Inc.
International Rescue Committee, Idaho
Saint Al's Center for Global Health and Healing

**Illinois**
Catholic Charities
Center for Forced Migration, Northwestern University
Chicago-Detroit Province of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits)
Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
HIAS Chicago
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Jewish Child and Family Services
La Criolla, Inc
Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants
University of Chicago

**Indiana**
Exodus Refugee Immigration Inc.

**Iowa**
Crossing Borders, Dubuque

**Kentucky**
Catholic Charities of Louisville, Inc.
Kentucky Refugee Ministries
Sarah's Place Women's Resource Center
Western Kentucky Refugee Mutual Assistance Society Inc. d/b/a International Center of Kentucky

**Massachusetts**
Community Legal Services and Counseling Center
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition

**Michigan**
Detroit Jews for Justice
Dominican Sisters, Grand Rapids
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
The Foundation for Justice and Development
Lutheran Social Services of Michigan
Southeast Michigan Synod
University of Michigan

**Minnesota**
Jewish Community Action
Our Savior's Community Services
Missouri
International Institute of St. Louis
Jewish Vocational Service
School Sisters of Notre Dame
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, MO--Gospel Justice Committee

Nebraska
Creighton Schlegel Center for Service and Justice
Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska Inc.
Schlegel Center for Service and Justice at Creighton University
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Justice Team

New Jersey
Jewish Vocational Service of Metrowest

New York
Amnesty International Ithaca Group 73
The Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Catholic Charities of Buffalo
Catholic Family Center
CCNS Refugee Resettlement Program
Faiths for Safe Water
HealthRight International
The Interfaith Center of New York
International Institute of Buffalo
Jewish Family Service of Buffalo & Erie County New York
Journey's End Refugee Services
Sisters of Charity of New York
Tompkins County Immigrant Rights Coalition

North Carolina
Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency
Catholic Charities, Raleigh
Church World Service, Durham Immigration and Refugee Program
Church World Service, Greensboro
Every Campus A Refuge
NC African Services Coalition
Sisters of Mercy South Central Community
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, NC

Ohio
Community Refugee & Immigration Services
Heartfelt Tidbits
International Institute of Akron
International Services Center of Cleveland

Pennsylvania
Casa San Jose
Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Greensburg PA
Church World Service, Lancaster
City Church
HIAS Pennsylvania
Immigration Taskforce, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Pittsburgh
Justice & Peace Committee Srs. of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Multicultural Community Resource Center
Multicultural Health Evaluation Delivery Systems (MHEDS)
Nationalities Service Center
Office of Campus Ministries at The University of Scranton
Peace and Justice Committee of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition
Philadelphia Japanese American Citizens League
Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, PA
Sisters of Saint Joseph Welcome Center

**Rhode Island**
Dorcas International Institute of RI

**Tennessee**
Bridge Refugee Services, Chattanooga, TN

**Texas**
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
Caritas of Austin
International Rescue Committee, Dallas

**Vermont**
New England Survivors of Torture and Trauma
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Vermont

**Virginia**
Church World Service/Refugee and Immigration Program, Richmond

**Washington**
Alliance for a Just Society
OneAmerica
Tacoma Community House

**West Virginia**
WV Citizen Action Group

**Wisconsin**
Holy Cross Sisters
Wisconsin Province of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits)

CC:
The Honorable Karen R. Bass
The Honorable Mike Bishop
The Honorable Ken Buck
The Honorable Steve Chabot
The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
The Honorable Dr. Judy Chu
The Honorable David Cicilline
The Honorable Stephen Ira Cohen
The Honorable Doug Collins
The Honorable Susan K. DelBene
The Honorable Ron De Santis
The Honorable Theodore Eliot "Ted" Deutch
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The Honorable Dave Trott
The Honorable Mimi Walters