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 Amnesty International USA Anti-Defamation League Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance The Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America **Bethany Christian Services** Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good Central Conference of American Rabbis Center for Applied Linguistics Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries in the U.S. and Canada Church of the Brethren, Office of Public Witness **Church World Service** Coalition of African Communities Community of St. Egidio USA Inc The Episcopal Church Franciscan Action Network Friends Committee on National Legislation Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ Heartland Alliance International HIAS Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters Human Rights First International Refugee Assistance Project InterAction International Rescue Committee J Street Jesuit Refugee Service/USA Jewish Council for Public Affairs Jewish Labor Committee Just Foreign Policy Kids in Need of Defense Latin America Working Group Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America Little Sisters of the Assumption - USA Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service Lutheran Social Services Mercy-USA for Aid and Development National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) National Council of La Raza National Immigrant Justice Center National Immigration Forum National Network for Arab American Communities

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

<u>Alabama</u>

Greater Birmingham Ministries

<u>Alaska</u>

Catholic Social Services

<u>Arizona</u>

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 Catholic Charities of The East Bay Center For Empowering Refugees and Immigrants Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) Community Health for Asian Americans Diversity in Health Training Institute Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles - Interfaith Refugee & Immigration Service International Institute of Los Angeles International Rescue Committee Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay Jewish Family Service of San Diego Lao Iu Mien Culture Association, Inc. LightHouse Mosque Mobilize the Immigrant Vote North County Immigration Task Force Northwest Forest Worker Center **Oakland Unified School District** Partnerships for Trauma Recovery **Pilgrim United Church of Christ Priority Africa Network** Refugee Forum of Orange County San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium San Ramon Valley Islamic Center Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN) St. Mary Crucifissa di Rosa Academies UC Hastings Center for Gender & Refugee Studies Colorado Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition Connecticut International Institute of Connecticut, Inc. **IRIS - Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services** Old St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Florida Church World Service, Broward Church World Service, Miami Church World Service, Palm Beach Coptic Orthodox Charities, Inc. Gulf Coast Jewish Family Community Services Parkview Baptist Church Youth Co-Op Legal Services Georgia Georgia Department of Public Health Idaho Amaraji Maha Maraj Boise to Bukavu

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

<u>Illinois</u>

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

<u>Indiana</u>

Exodus Refugee Immigration Inc.

lowa

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

<u>Michigan</u>

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

<u>Minnesota</u>

Jewish Community Action Our Savior's Community Services

<u>Missouri</u>

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

<u>Tennessee</u>

Bridge Refugee Services, Chattanooga, TN

<u>Texas</u>

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

<u>Virginia</u>

Church World Service/Refugee and Immigration Program, Richmond

Washington

Alliance for a Just Society

OneAmerica

Tacoma Community House

West Virginia

WV Citizen Action Group

<u>Wisconsin</u>

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 The Honorable Randolph Blake Farenthold The Honorable J. Randy Forbes The Honorable Trent Franks The Honorable Louie Gohmert The Honorable Trey Gowdy, III The Honorable Luis V. Gutierrez The Honorable Darrell Issa The Honorable Sheila Jackson-Lee The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries The Honorable Henry C. Johnson, Jr. The Honorable Jim Jordan The Honorable Steven A. King The Honorable Raul Rafael Labrador The Honorable Zoe Lofgren The Honorable Thomas Anthony Marino The Honorable Jerrold Lewis Nadler The Honorable Scott Peters The Honorable Pedro R. Pierluisi The Honorable Ted Poe The Honorable John Ratcliffe The Honorable Cedric Levon Richmond The Honorable Frank James "Jim" Sensenbrenner The Honorable Lamar Smith The Honorable Dave Trott The Honorable Mimi Walters