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 Convers:

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** 

#### 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** 

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

#### 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

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