Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

July 17, 2018

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

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Secretary Pompeo:

We write regarding the current administration and operation of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), which has successfully resettled refugees from around the world who have enriched our nation and brought economic growth to our communities. The world is experiencing the largest refugee crisis in history as millions seek protection from unimaginable violence and hardship. Around the world, there are 22.5 million refugees – more than half of them children. The United States has proudly resettled refugees from the most vulnerable and persecuted populations, regardless of their faith or national origin.

Our country has a long bipartisan history of welcoming refugees, which both reflects American values and serves as a strong diplomatic tool. USRAP is a life-saving humanitarian program and is grounded in a public-private partnership model, resettling an average of 80,000 refugees annually for over 40 years. As part of this process, refugees must pass multi-step background checks, and once they are resettled in the United States, they quickly integrate, find employment, and begin giving back to their new communities. Our nation’s role in responding to today’s refugee crisis will determine our moral, diplomatic, and economic standing among world leaders.

In September 2017, your Administration announced a Presidential Determination of 45,000 for Fiscal Year 2018, the lowest refugee admissions ceiling ever set. To meet this number, the United States must admit 3,750 refugees each month. However, as of July 9th, only 16,429 refugees have arrived in the U.S. At this pace, the United States may only admit 20,000 refugees for this fiscal year, well short of the 45,000 ceiling set by the Administration.

We respectfully request answers to the following questions regarding the implementation of the refugee resettlement program for FY18:

- In October 2017, DHS announced additional security screening procedures for refugee admissions. How have these measures been implemented to ensure that refugees are admitted at a timely rate? Which other or additional agencies, if any, are handling security screenings and what are the operations in place to ensure cases are processed efficiently?
• What steps, if any, is the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) taking to increase the rate at which refugees are processed and admitted in a good faith effort to meet the 45,000 refugee admissions goal for FY 2018?
• Given the 90% reduction in admissions of Muslim refugees in the first six months of FY 2018 compared to the first six months of FY 2017, what steps, if any, is DHS taking to ensure the United States is committed to resettling the most vulnerable, regardless of faith or country of origin?
• How have staffing changes at the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) impacted refugee resettlement and coordination with DHS?
• What is the current decision-making process at PRM given vacancies in leadership positions? How is the administration ensuring that decisions are being made by experts in refugee protection, rather than removed staff elsewhere at the Department of State? What steps, if any, is DHS taking to ensure a productive working relationship with PRM given staffing changes?
• Is the proposal to transfer some of PRM’s responsibilities to DHS or the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) still being considered? If so, what is the process, timeline, and criteria for these decisions? And what are plans to consult with Congress prior to any determination being made?
• The Administration has supported reducing refugee admissions in favor of other forms of international humanitarian assistance. What specific types of foreign assistance does your Administration support, and what steps will you take to ensure it is delivered effectively? Given that refugee resettlement also supports our foreign policy priorities, describe the ways in which resettlement can support U.S. humanitarian assistance efforts.

As the United States aims to put its values and interests first, we must not forget that refugees fill critical roles in our economy, and that resettling the world’s most vulnerable populations has a rich bipartisan tradition. Resettling refugees is a way that the United States can live out its core values and ensure a more stable and democratic world. We implore you to increase the pace of arrivals for the remainder of the fiscal year to meet your Presidential Determination of 45,000. Overcoming the current global humanitarian crisis we face requires your leadership. Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your response to our questions no later than August 3rd.

Sincerely,

TIM WALZ
Member of Congress

STEVE STIVERS
Member of Congress

DIANA DEGETTE
Member of Congress

JENNIFER GONZÁLEZ COLÓN
Member of Congress

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