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**Statement of the American Immigration Lawyers Association
Submitted to the Committee on the Judiciary of the U.S. House of Representatives
June 14, 2017 Markup
Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act of 2017 (H.R. 2826)**

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The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) is the national bar association of more than 15,000 attorneys and law professors who practice and teach immigration law. AILA respectfully opposes the “Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act of 2017” ([H.R. 2826](#)) as introduced, including the [Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute to H.R. 2826](#). Most troubling, this proposed legislation would permanently cap the annual number of refugees resettled in the United States to 50,000 at a time when we are witnessing the largest refugee crisis since World War II. With more than 65 million refugees and displaced people around the world, it is imperative that the United States renew its commitment to humanitarian protection worldwide. If passed, H.R. 2826 would have devastating consequences on the U.S. Refugee Assistance Program and impede the United States’ ability to respond to humanitarian emergencies. Below is a list of harmful provisions contained in H.R. 2826.

- **Limits refugee admissions to 50,000 a year** and removes the President’s authority to determine the number of refugees resettled. The bill’s requirement that Congress authorize any increase is completely unworkable and eliminates U.S. capacity to respond to urgent humanitarian crisis.
- **Prioritizes religious minorities above all other refugees.** Requires that individuals who are practitioners of a minority religion and have fled from a “country of particular concern” be afforded priority consideration for refugee status. This provision undermines efforts by the United States and the United Nations to resettle refugees based on vulnerability.
- **Provides state and local governments with the right to shut down refugee resettlement in their states and localities.** This provision would relinquish federal control over immigration laws and could lead to chaotic patchwork of immigration and refugee policies throughout the country.
- **Seeks to impose costly and unnecessary burdens on U.S. refugee program.** Imposes new “anti-fraud” requirements that would needlessly burden USCIS and refugee applicants and delay refugee adjudications. These delays will leave refugees in dangerous conditions for longer periods of time. The U.S. refugee program already applies extremely rigorous security and background checks to screen all refugees before they are cleared for resettlement in the United States.
- **Delays the ability for refugees to adjust status.** Provides that refugees must wait 3 years instead of 1 year to apply to adjust status to a lawful permanent resident (LPR), delaying naturalization and imposing an undue hardship on a highly vulnerable population.
- **Limits Discretionary Waivers of Grounds of Inadmissibility for Crimes.** Repeals provisions of current law that provide DHS with discretion to waive crimes, including minor crimes, in order to admit an individual as a refugee and permanent resident at time of adjustment. Denying waiver authority could pose severe consequences for highly vulnerable individuals. For example an individual who was forced into prostitution in a war-torn area and who is inadmissible as a result would be ineligible for a waiver of their inadmissibility if they had been convicted of the crime of prostitution by their persecuting government.

Our nation has always been a beacon of hope for those fleeing persecution and oppression and we urge Congress not to pass legislation that would impose such restrictions on the U.S. refugee program which saves thousands of lives.

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