

Dear Members of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee,

As faith leaders from across the country, we write to ask for your support during a challenging time for refugees in our communities. Specifically, we ask you to prevent proposed cuts to the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account in fiscal year 2013 (FY13).

The United States has historically been a world leader in welcoming refugees fleeing persecution. Our refugee program is a strong public / private partnership, demonstrating collective responsibility to provide safety and a new start to refugees who cannot return home, including Iraqi refugees targeted for their work with the U.S. government; Burmese ethnic minorities and pro-democracy freedom fighters fleeing a repressive regime; Darfuris driven out of their homes and surviving in harsh camp conditions; and countless individuals and families fleeing religious persecution.

This year, the Labor/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee recommended significant cuts to domestic refugee services, which would have significant negative consequences for refugees in the United States. The Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account funds the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which works with local community organizations and faith and civic groups to provide basic human needs and the tools for integration and self-sufficiency. Cuts to this already underfunded account would not only negatively impact refugees, but also take away important resources from communities welcoming refugees in districts like yours.

ORR serves not only refugees, but also asylees, victims of torture and trafficking, special immigrant visa recipients who served with U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and unaccompanied immigrant and refugee children. In 2012, ORR served an unprecedented number of unaccompanied immigrant children, a highly vulnerable population whose specialized care is ORR's responsibility. ORR must be robustly funded in order to provide sufficient services to these children and the more than 100,000 vulnerable migrants under its mandate.

As people of faith, we commit our ministries, religious services, and resources to helping refugees resettle and integrate in their new communities and have long been partners in the U.S. refugee program. We are called to serve "the least of these" and to "welcome the stranger," and we know that investing in welcome results in blessings for this country. As you consider funding for FY13, we urge you to support the Senate mark and the President's request of \$805 million for REA, rather than the proposed cuts. We recognize and appreciate your own commitment to those in need, and hope that you support this request to be a champion for refugees and those who welcome them.

Sincerely,

National Faith Leaders

Regional / Local Faith Leaders (organized by state)