



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

February 15, 2017

Hon. Carl Heastie
Speaker of the New York State Assembly
LOB 932
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Speaker Heastie:

We write today regarding the issue of refugee resettlement in New York State. We are very concerned about the impact of the Trump administration's ban on refugees coming into the United States. The President's 120-day ban on admitting new refugees goes against everything we stand for as a nation, and thankfully it is currently on hold, pending resolution in the federal court system. If the ban were to be fully implemented, it would significantly impact the operations of refugee resettlement agencies across New York State. New York has taken a leading role in accepting refugees from across the globe, and upstate New York in particular has become a major resettlement area for refugees. Of the 5,028 refugees who were resettled in New York State in 2016, 94% went to communities upstate. The upstate counties of Erie, Onondaga, Monroe, Albany, Oneida, and Broome were home to the largest numbers of resettled refugees in 2016. We are advocating for a \$12 million package of funding to be included in the budget for refugee resettlement agencies to address the consequences of the Trump administration's refugee ban, and to invest in refugee integration efforts.

If the President's 120-day pause in refugee resettlement is implemented, it would be devastating for refugee resettlement agencies across New York State, and lead to millions of dollars in lost revenue and staff cuts. Refugee resettlement agencies are allocated funding on a per arrival basis. If no new arrivals are coming, the agencies are not funded, and they would not be able to continue to provide services. Without funding, the agencies would not be able to serve the refugees who have already come to New York, and are currently being resettled. On day 121, after the refugee ban has concluded, the agencies would not be able to immediately begin resettling refugees again, because there would be no staff in place. The refugee resettlement agencies must be able to remain at capacity during the 120-day period in order to continue to serve refugees who are already here, and be ready to accept new refugees once the ban is over. We are asking that the budget include \$2 million in state funding to assist the refugee resettlement agencies. This funding would allow them to remain at capacity, and make up for any lost revenue as a result of refugees no longer coming into New York State for the duration of the President's ban.

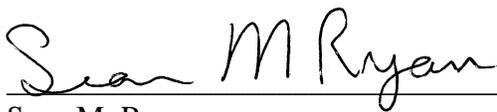
We would also like the budget to include \$5 million for a new state program to provide funding for refugee resettlement agencies beyond the initial 90-day resettlement period. Refugee resettlement agencies receive \$950 from the federal government for each refugee arrival. That funding is used for the initial 90-day resettlement period. During this time, the resettlement agencies help refugees to get an apartment, get their children into school, and begin finding a job. The 90-day period is not long enough to fully immerse the refugees, and help them to become fully self-sufficient and integrated into society. The new program would allow refugee resettlement agencies to provide an additional 90-days of services to refugees to help with refugee integration.

During this period, resettlement agencies would help refugees with better support for employment, literacy for both adults and children, information about how to start a business or how to buy a house, and basic civics information such as how to interact with police, local government, and neighbors. The more a refugee can be integrated into society, the more likely they are to become self-sufficient and successful. In the communities we represent, refugees can help to boost population, occupy previously vacant housing, and strengthen neighborhoods.

We are also requesting \$5 million in funding to be included in the budget to help provide legal services to refugees. This funding will help to expand programs to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate legal services to refugees. Those who come to the US as refugees face a complex legal system that can be very difficult to manage on their own. Additional funding for legal services will help refugees to ensure they are complying with all legal requirements.

The Trump administration refugee ban is causing chaos across the county, especially here in New York. The refugee resettlement agencies in the communities we represent are very concerned about what this order will mean for the vulnerable populations they serve. We are a progressive state, and we welcome refugees with open arms. As a part of that commitment to accepting refugees, we should provide state resources to ensure refugees can continue to be resettled in our communities, and thrive in their new environment. Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your leadership to New York State.

Sincerely,



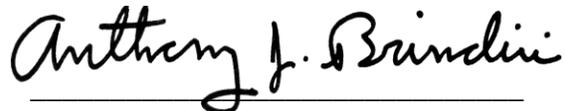
Sean M. Ryan



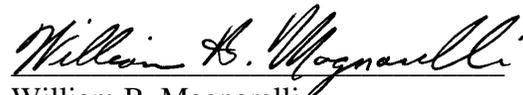
Barbara Lifton



John T. McDonald III



Anthony Brindisi



William B. Magnarelli



Patricia Fahy