March 15, 2017

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of Denominations and Churches representing 30 million Americans across the country, we write to urge you to do everything in your power to stop the implementation of the executive order impacting refugees and individuals from six countries.

We present to you attached to this letter the Ecumenical Declaration: Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope. Through the 10 steps enumerated in this ecumenical pledge, we commit to mobilize our congregations and networks nationwide to safeguard America’s welcome and stand in solidarity with immigrants and refugees. We further commit to activating our local congregations across the country to fully rescind this order and to raising $1 million over the next six months to support our refugee resettlement program, should this order go into effect.

Members of Congress: we are your constituents from states and denominations across our United States. Heed our voices.

Our view is that the most recent order is but a cosmetic change to that issued on January 27. Its intent and effect remain the same—and Americans continue to oppose this discriminatory policy. This is evidenced in the robust support for refugees in immigrants that we see in states across the country and from a diverse range of faith leaders nationwide.

Yet this executive order, as its first rendition, still suspends refugee resettlement for all nationalities for 120 days. This is much more than a mere pause, since each part of the robust resettlement security check process has a short validity period, all of which must align simultaneously. For many, the 120-day suspension will mean a chain of expiring screenings that will set their application back months and even years, all while their lives are at risk.

In addition, the rewritten executive order still drastically reduces the number of refugees we will welcome this year—to the lowest resettlement goal in U.S. history. Senators and Representatives, the U.S. Refugee Admissions program has always had bipartisan support. Offering refuge to our neighbor in need is simply the right thing to do—regardless of what side of the political aisle you stand on. This is a humanitarian crisis that transcends politics. We cannot shun our duties as Americans and as fellow human beings. Not now.

By lowering refugee admissions by 64 percent to 50,000, we are turning our backs on refugees we have promised to protect, who have already been approved by the Department of Homeland Security, and who have already prepared to rebuild their lives in safety here.

This executive order runs counter to fundamental American values and contradicts who we are as a nation. As a global leader with a longstanding legacy of welcoming newcomers from every corner of the world, we cannot shut our door to the world’s most vulnerable people. This policy is inhumane, bad for business, and dangerous for our foreign policy. It alienates our allies and places us on the wrong side of history.

Already, refugees are the most thoroughly vetted people entering the United States, and we know that this work has been and continues to be exemplary. Yet this executive order remains essentially both a refugee and a Muslim ban. That does not contribute to our national interests or represent what America stands for.
Members of Congress: this is not what we as Americans stand for. As our elected officials, we call on you to do everything in the power vested in you to stop the implementation of this executive order. We are counting on you to represent us and affirm the importance of the U.S. Refugee Admissions program.

May God bless you as you continue to help steer our nation forward.

Sincerely,

Rev. John L. McCullough, President & CEO, Church World Service

Jim Winkler, President & General Secretary, National Council of Churches USA