

RCUSA COVID #4 Priorities

Funding Request

We are asking for an additional **\$642 million in Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) funds** for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Dep't of Health and Human Services (HHS) for resettlement services (including Transition and Medical Services (TAMS) and Refugee Support Services (RSS)). This funding would go toward cash and medical assistance, housing/rent, utilities, transportation, food, and health needs unavailable through normally operating public channels.

Bill Language

Refugee Applications for Legal Permanent Residence

1. Waive USCIS interviews for refugees applying for adjustment of status (see USCIS [manual](#)), or at minimum permit remote interviews.
2. Direct USCIS to re-use [biometric](#) information for refugees applying for adjustment of status to prevent further delays, as [USCIS has already done](#) for I-765 forms (Application for Employment Authorization).

Re-allocate Refugee Admissions to Meet the FY2020 PD

Pressure the administration to re-allocate refugee admissions to ensure the U.S. meets the FY2020 record-low admissions goal of 18,000.

Technical Fix for 2019 Refugee Arrivals

Clarify that all refugees, including those who were admitted in 2019 and 2020 (i.e., January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2020) should be treated as "resident aliens" and eligible for the direct cash rebate and thus eligible, whether or not they have adjusted to LPR status or naturalized. Here is suggested language:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, for the purposes of Section 2201 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, an individual admitted as a refugee under Immigration and Nationality Act Section 207 or 208 in calendar year 2019 or 2020 shall be considered a resident alien.

Implementation of ORR Funding

Congress recognizes the importance of meeting the immediate needs of recently arrived refugees and other populations receiving resettlement services due to this public health and economic crisis. Congress therefore directs the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services's Office of Refugee Resettlement to:

1. Increase Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) benefits from eight to eighteen months for direct assistance during the extent of the crisis, such as covering housing stabilization, food, and medical assistance.
2. Provide additional \$2000 per-capita for all current and future FY2020 Matching Grant enrollments to ensure rent and utilities are paid for at least 180 days - and waive or suspend the Matching Grant requirement for this additional funding.
3. Expand the Preferred Communities Program threefold to cover emergency assistance, such as for food, housing, and health needs.
4. Ensure that resettlement agencies are able to maintain their infrastructure and capacity at a level to continue to serve newly arrived refugees, previously arrived refugees, and other populations of concern who remain statutorily eligible for integration services, and to ensure that there is capacity for future arrivals to be adequately served.

Please note that this implementation language is not an exhaustive list of how ORR funding should be implemented. Within the \$642 million request, at least \$200 million should be used to expand emergency support through Refugee Support Services (RSS).

Implementation of MRA Funds in COVID #3

Congress recognizes the importance of assisting newly arrived refugees and Special Immigrant Visa (SIVs) recipients in light of the coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring all community members are able to mitigate risks to their vulnerability to COVID-19. Congress also recognizes that the infrastructure of the resettlement program is being challenged, particularly in light of the moratorium on refugee arrivals, which inhibits refugee resettlements' ability to serve newcomers, resettled refugees, as well as Afghan and Iraqi SIV recipients, asylees, and others. Congress further recognizes that it is important to preserve the capacity of overseas infrastructure, including the Resettlement Support Centers (RSCs) overseas, so that refugee arrivals can resume expeditiously. Congress therefore directs the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration to:

1. Increase reception and placement direct assistance by \$1,000 per capita to strengthen direct support for recent and new arrivals, including and beyond their first 90 days of arrival, effective upon the date of enactment of this Act until September 30, 2020;
2. Provide \$1,200 in cash assistance directly to each refugee and Afghan and Iraqi SIV who has arrived in the United States in the last 12 months [DELETE if Congress appropriates supplemental funding for ORR];
3. Obligate funding to each of the nine refugee resettlement agencies in order to stabilize the refugee resettlement infrastructure required to continue serving refugees, in an amount to be calculated by the Department of State, in consultation with the nine national resettlement agencies; and
4. Maintain level funding to the RSCs even while processing refugees for resettlement to the United States is temporarily suspended.

Report / Bill Language

Refugee Processing

The United States has temporarily suspended refugee admissions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants also face significant travel limitations. We take seriously the risks of this global pandemic, and the need to ensure that refugees arrive in communities that are prepared to support their successful integration. We also understand the gravity that these decisions have and urge the administration to continue to facilitate the resettlement of refugees who are in immediate danger and in need of urgent care.

We note that unaccompanied refugee minors (URM) are highly vulnerable. We direct the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to continue to facilitate URM admissions wherever possible. We note our concern the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is no longer accepting resettlement referrals from UNHCR and NGOs, including for URM. The needs of vulnerable refugee children will only increase during this pandemic period, and continued resettlement of URM is necessary to maintain this vital protection avenue for the most vulnerable refugee children.

Congress is deeply concerned that the present pandemic will serve to extend even further about the significant delays in refugee and SIV processing. Congress expresses particular concern for refugees pursuing family reunification through Priority-3 refugee admissions and through the I-730 follow-to-join process. Congress notes that both programs have faced exceptional delays that leave refugee families separated. Congress is also deeply concerned that applicants for admission as refugees who are nationals subject to Security Advisory Opinion requirements have faced dramatically increased security delays and plummeting arrivals.

Congress notes its concern that the Administration had not made a good faith effort to continue robust refugee admissions, resulting in historically low arrivals. Congress directs the Department of State and its vetting partners to extend security check validity periods for refugees and special immigrants. Congress also directs the Departments of State and Homeland Security to continue processing, including security vetting, of immigration benefits to the extent such processing is unaffected by the pandemic. Congress also directs the Departments of State and Homeland Security to resume refugee admissions expeditiously consistent with general travel restrictions from refugees' countries of residence. Congress directs the Department of State to reallocate refugee admissions to ensure that the Presidential Determination for fiscal year 2020 can be reached.

Processing for Immigration Benefits

Congress recognizes that many individuals with valid immigrant visas, nonimmigrant visas, or entry permits are currently outside the United States and face difficulties traveling to the United States, or inside the United States and facing expiration of their status. Others applying for visas or immigration benefits face deadlines to submit applications, appear for interviews, or to provide evidence. The Committee directs the Departments of State and Homeland Security to exercise favorable discretion to extend validity periods and deadlines as a matter of policy and to authorize or extend parole during the coronavirus-19 pandemic. Congress directs the Departments of State and Homeland Security to continue to exercise favorable discretion until the World Health Organization deems the virus to be in a post-pandemic period and all coronavirus-19-related Presidential Proclamations restricting travel are rescinded.