

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 27, 2026

Joseph Edlow
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
5900 Capital Gateway Drive
Camp Springs, MD 20588

Todd Lyons
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th St SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Lyons and Mr. Edlow,

We write with serious concern regarding unprecedented changes to the U.S. refugee processing and efforts by the Trump administration to effectively end access to lawful refugee status. Since its inception, the U.S. refugee program has been a safe, humane, secure, and orderly process by which individuals facing unimaginable hardship abroad are offered a second chance. We are deeply troubled by the administration's recent changes, subjecting nearly all recently resettled refugees to detention, upending the refugee program in the U.S. as we know it, and subjecting thousands to inhumane detention practices. Accordingly, we demand that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immediately rescind this policy that jeopardizes the legal status and lives of refugees currently residing in the U.S.

Since 1975, the U.S. has welcomed more than three million refugees, formalizing a process for resettlement in the wake of World War II.¹ Since then, refugee resettlement in the U.S. has become the strictest, most stringent immigration pathway, requiring thorough application and interview processes before a refugee can arrive on U.S. soil. Despite an otherwise flawed immigration system, refugee resettlement in this country has been extremely successful, representing a promise to American values of freedom from violence and persecution. Through a thorough, 18 to 24 month process of pre-arrival referral and security vetting, partnerships with federal agencies and refugee assistance organizations, arrival and case management services, and sustained resettlement support, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) has successfully resettled thousands of individuals in recent years who become contributing, meaningful members of their host communities.

It is well-documented that resettled refugees bolster, contribute to, and strengthen our national and local economies. According to an analysis from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), refugees and asylees brought a net positive fiscal impact of \$123.8 billion over a fifteen-year period.² Additionally, with

¹ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. *Refugee admissions*. U.S. Department of State. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/prm/ra/index.htm>

² Robin Ghertner, Suzanne Macartney, and Meredith Dost. *The fiscal impact of refugees and asylees at the federal, state, and local levels from 2005 to 2019*. (2024) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/fiscal-impact-refugees-asylees>

time, refugees become a critical part of the American workforce, with high-rates of employment and upward mobility across sectors of the job market. These populations fill critical roles, from manufacturing and service industries to pharmaceutical and medical professions, becoming a deeply integrated part of their new communities and future homes.

We are deeply concerned with the troubling actions the Trump administration has taken to undermine the refugee program, gradually siphoning off access to individuals' ability to seek, achieve, and maintain refugee status in the U.S. In October 2025, Trump announced his decision to lower the refugee admissions ceiling to 7,500 for Fiscal Year 2026, the lowest in U.S. history.³ Then in November 2025, the administration ordered a sweeping review of all refugees who entered the U.S. under the Biden administration, jeopardizing the status of thousands of previously-vetted refugees through rescreening.⁴

Most troublingly, on February 18, 2026, DHS issued a memo mandating that refugees with lawful status who do not possess a green card must return to federal custody one year after admission to the U.S., permitting Immigration and Customs Enforcement to arrest and detain refugees for immediate re-interviewing.⁵ This policy appears to allow the administration to detain refugees while their lawful permanent resident status is being considered, a process that can take months and that USCIS has already reportedly paused. Currently, refugees are only eligible for a green card after one year of residence in the U.S. As a result of this unprecedented policy, essentially all refugees who recently arrived to the U.S. – who are already required to seek a green card after one year of residence in the U.S. – will be subject to detention as well as an undefined set of parameters used by DHS to determine if they can remain in the United States and protected from the dangers of their home countries. This runs contrary to the entire premise of the refugee program – that vetted recipients fleeing unimaginable persecution are legally entitled to a safe haven in the U.S., without fear of being uprooted through detention or even deportation.

Accordingly, we request that the administration immediately respond to the following questions:

1. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), refugees are only eligible to apply for a green card following one year of lawful residence in the U.S. Will individuals who *voluntarily* present themselves to DHS after 365 days be subject to detention?
2. It has been widely reported that USCIS has paused adjustment of status for refugees. Will DHS commit to not detaining or deporting refugees with pending green card applications after 365 days of being lawfully present within the U.S.?
3. The memo states that individuals may be held for “the reasonable length of time it takes to inspect and examine the alien to determine whether he or she is admissible.” What is considered a reasonable length of time?
4. Will immigration courts have jurisdiction over refugees detained under this new policy?
 - a. Are refugees who are detained eligible for bond?
5. What is DHS’s proposed process for inspection and examination?
6. Will refugees in detention have access to counsel for their re-vetting interviews?
7. Will re-vetting interviews ask for new information, or will questions be the same as those posed during initial vetting interviews?

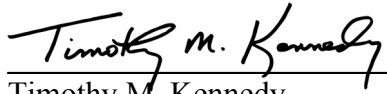
³ Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026. Federal Register, September 30, 2025. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/10/31/2025-19752/presidential-determination-on-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2026>

⁴ Associated Press. (2025, November 25). *Trump administration plans to review refugees admitted under Biden, memo obtained by the AP says*. PBS NewsHour. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/trump-administration-plans-to-review-refugees-admitted-under-biden-memo-obtained-by-the-ap-says>

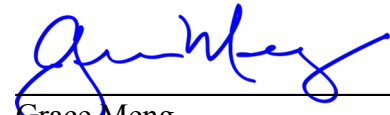
⁵ Arelis R. Hernandez and Teo Armus. *New DHS memo outlines plan to detain refugees for further vetting*. Washington Post, February 18, 2026. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2026/02/18/trump-immigrants-refugees-minnesota-memo/>

We demand that the administration reverse the decision to subject refugees to arrest and detention following their presence in the U.S. for one year, as well as additional policies that undermine the refugee process. We respectfully remind the administration that these policy decisions at the administrative level have very human consequences, including separating families, disrupting entire communities, subjecting refugees to inhumane detention conditions, and even jeopardizing lives.

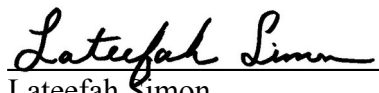
Sincerely,




Timothy M. Kennedy
Member of Congress




Grace Meng
Chair, Congressional Asian Pacific
American Caucus



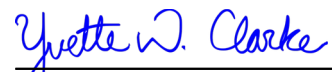
Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



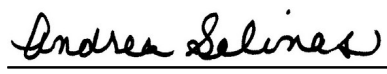
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



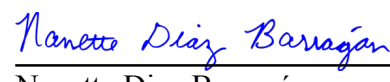
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress




Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



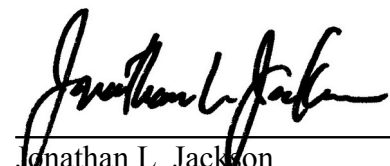
Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress



Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



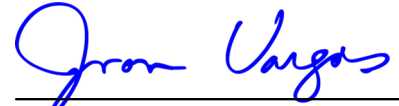
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



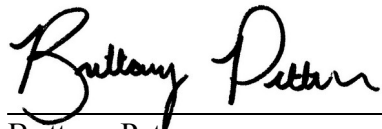
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



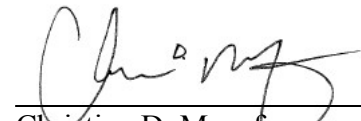
Sydney Kamlager Dove
Member of Congress



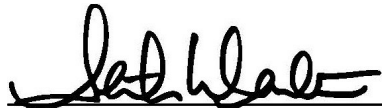
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



Christian D. Menefee
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



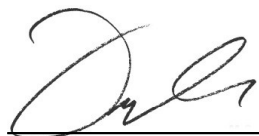
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



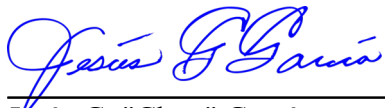
JM Tokuda
Member of Congress



MARK TAKANO
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



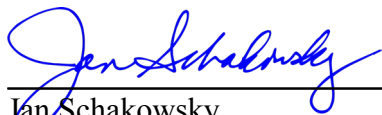
Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



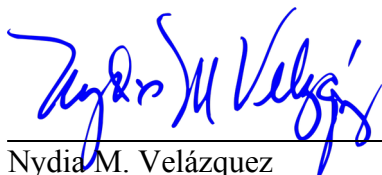
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



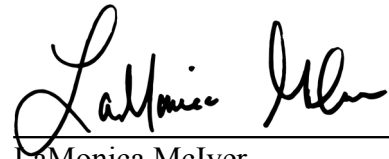
Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



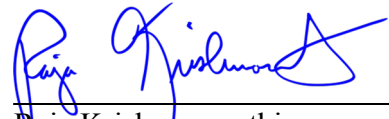
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



George Latimer
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



Ed Case
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress