



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 16, 2019

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Resolution in Response to Presidential Executive Order #13888 related to Restricting Refugee Resettlement in States and Localities. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

ISSUE: Indicating support for continued refugee resettlement in the City of Alexandria.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council adopt the attached resolution affirming the City's support for the resettlement of refugees in the City of Alexandria, and direct that a copy of this resolution be provided to the executive and legislative branches of the governments of the United States of America and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

BACKGROUND: On September 26, 2019 President Trump signed executive order #13888 entitled "Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement" which requires that the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services seek consent from state and local authorities prior to continuing ongoing refugee resettlement activities. Despite its title, this Executive Order is aimed at further restricting the flow of refugees into the United States by allowing states and localities within those states to decline the placement of refugees within those states and localities. To continue to allow refugee resettlement in a locality, both a state and a locality within that state would have to affirmatively indicate their willingness to allow refugee resettlements to occur.

Open refugee resettlement in the United States has long been an operating principle of the United States government, but now as another step in limiting the flow of refugees into the United States, President Trump has signed an executive order to further limit and/or make more difficult refugee resettlement into the United States.

The City of Alexandria has long embraced the resettlement of refugees and those immigrating into the United States. In its adopted 2016 Statement on Inclusiveness, Council stated: "we proclaim that we remain committed to diversity and to fostering an atmosphere of inclusiveness". The City's population is very diverse. In 2016, it was estimated that there were nearly 7,200 refugees living in the City of Alexandria. Refugees have had an ongoing positive impact on our community through employment in professional, service, trades and business occupations, and through their participation in every facet of community life. Refugees, and eventually their children, become self-sufficient taxpaying residents and ultimately taxpaying citizens.

A 2016 report on immigrants (of which refugees are a subset) in Alexandria indicated that they had some \$1 billion in annual spending power after paying some \$262 million in federal taxes as well as \$102 million in state and local taxes. Immigrants were less likely than US born residents to be enrolled in Medicaid. They represent 62% of construction workers, 48% of hospitality workers and

41% of health care workers in the City. Immigrants also represent some 34% of entrepreneurs in the City, compared to 28% of the overall population; 40% of immigrants held a bachelor's degree and 19% held an advanced degree, with 21% of immigrants owning their own home.

Clearly the contributions made by immigrants and refugees to the strength and vibrancy of the City of Alexandria underscore this communication to the federal and state governments of the City's strong desire to continue to be a place where refugees may settle.

It is proposed that City Council adopt the attached resolution, which then will be distributed to the appropriate federal and executive and legislative offices.

ATTACHMENT: Proposed Resolution

STAFF:

Jean Kelleher, Director, Office of Human Rights