

January 6, 2020

Ford County Board of Commissioners

Shawn Tasset, 1st District Commissioner

Chris Boys, 2nd District Commissioner

Kenneth Snook, 3rd District Commissioner

RE: Executive Order 13888 on Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement

Dear Ford County Commissioners:

I'm a proud life-long resident of Dodge City, representing a body of individuals in Ford County with expressed concerns regarding a recent letter from Mayor Delzeit, consenting to refugee resettlement in Dodge City on November 20, 2019. This letter is in reference to President Trump's executive order 13888 "Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement" on September 26, 2019.

We were surprised that Mayor Delzeit unilaterally decided that our town would accept more refugees without public input or more official information regarding his consent. Governor Kelly has also consented to refugee resettlement and submitted her letter to the U.S. State Department on November 27, 2019. According to the U.S. Department's funding guidance for the Reception and Placement Program (R&P) for resettlement agencies, it is the county government that must officially opt-in or opt-out of refugee resettlement under President Trump's executive order. I want to address the following reasons to be considered for opting out of the refugee resettlement plan in Ford County.

Unlike asylum seekers who arrive in the United States on their own, refugees who are accepted for resettlement are entitled to Reception and Placement (R&P) assistance and are sponsored by resettlement agencies under a cooperative agreement with the Department of State:

The Department of State's standard cooperative agreement with each of the resettlement agencies specifies the services the agency must provide, which include housing, essential furnishings, food, necessary clothing, orientation, and assistance with access to other social, medical, and employment services. The federal R&P Program provides resettlement agencies a one-time payment per refugee to assist with expenses during a refugee's first three months in the United States.¹ Still, the program anticipates that sponsoring agencies will contribute significant cash or in-kind resources to supplement U.S. government funding.

The following questions revolve around the current R&P petitioning of executive order 13888. My research shows that refugee resettlement will have an impact beyond the first three months of the acceptance period on overextended community services in the county by the existing population. The R&P program promoted by resettlement agencies falls on Ford County once the federally funded ninety-day assistance program is exhausted.

Question One: Public Assistance

- Have you considered the impact on social service agencies in Ford County that newcomers will benefit from?
 1. The Dodge City Housing Authority and HUD Housing in Southwest Kansas provides housing assistance for low income families and refugees. They use a first come, first serve application process to provide housing and apartments to qualified applicants. Their current wait list is anywhere from 6 months to 1 year and up to two years for the voucher program.
 2. Refugees are able to receive welfare benefits such as Kansas Medicaid, along with various mental health services, childcare services, food stamps, and other resources. They can renew their assistance as long as they continue to meet the state guidelines.

Question Two: Self-Sufficiency

- What is the method to mobilize newcomers to become self-sufficient and maintain self-sufficiency after 90 days of services from the resettlement?
- Have you considered that the impact of this labor force will come with an offsetting price of increased social services in Ford County?

Question Three: Financial Insecurities

- Is there a plan to include challenges that are related to financial insecurities? Will refugees depend upon Government support, or will they become self-supporting contributors to Ford County?

Question Four: Mental Health

- Is there a plan to accept the responsibilities related to the possible negative resettlement experiences or trauma from refugees who will have an impact on Ford County mental health services?
 1. There is a lack of mental health service providers in Ford County, including clinical therapists and psychiatrists.

Question Five: Health Care Services

- Is there a plan to accept the responsibilities related to health care services and emergencies?

Question Six: Education

Is there a plan for Ford County education systems in host locations to provide funding for teachers and the necessary programs for refugee children to have a quality education?

Additional Costs Associated with School Social Workers or Counselors

Refugees generally are more impoverished with lower earnings than economic migrants and have lower levels of education and language skills when they arrive. There will be a need for the additional costs associated with hiring school social workers and counselors to offset the effect on local schools who host refugee placement. These costs are associated with the factors listed below on the ability of refugee parents to care for their children's needs.

- The lack of knowledge about typical U.S. parenting norms and behaviors. Refugee families may have different expectations of discipline methods, supervision, the amount of work children do around the home, and more.
- The ability to balance resettlement challenges with parenting responsibilities. Refugee parents may struggle with balancing their work schedules with children's school schedules and learning enough English to interact with school staff, while refugee students struggle to cope with sadness due to family members who are missing or left behind, changing circumstances, traumatic memories, and/or abuse. ²

Newcomer Programs in Hosting Schools

- Are hosting schools adequately equipped in programs which are regulated by federal laws related to national origin discrimination in the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964? This prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance.
- Are there adequate funds to ensure that refugees in federally funded programs have access to information and services associated with skills development, language support, and academic support for lost years of schooling?

The local hosting school will also need to provide additional funds associated with added programs to provide technical assistance to facilitate the district's capacity to:

- Facilitate policy, requirements, procedures, and activities by providing translators and interpreters in the native languages for refugee families.
- Link refugee students to support programs within the district to help them achieve academic and social-emotional integration.
- Work with community-based organizations to support refugee youth.
- Encourage refugee parents to engage in the education of their children. ³

Long Term Costs

Most refugees arrive in the United States with few financial resources and possess few marketable job skills. The American taxpayer bears high costs for the resettling of refugees. These financial commitments can go on for years. While the United States most assuredly has an interest in helping those in dire need, it must not pose a crushing burden at the state and local levels.

The estimated cost for refugee resettlement totaled \$976 million in Fiscal Year 2019 and could amount to \$892 million in FY 2020. This means that each of the 30,000 resettled refugees in FY 2019 cost American taxpayers an estimated \$32,533, and each of the 18,000 refugees to be resettled in FY 2020 is expected to cost American taxpayers \$49,555. These direct costs are related to the refugee resettlement program that includes general expenses, staffing, refugee officers' salary, and benefits, etc. These costs do not, however, include indirect services to refugees, such as Medicaid, Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI) programs, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), etc. ⁴

Both health and social problems will extend beyond the short-term emergency phase. It is now widely accepted that refugees will stay and expect final resettlement in their places of assignment, a process that requires comprehensive and long-term management and rehabilitation interventions.

President Trump's approach on refugees protects the welfare of American citizens. He recently stated, "A responsible approach to refugees is one that seeks the eventual return of refugees to their home countries so that they can help to rebuild their own nations."⁵ The United States expects to receive more than 368,000 new refugees and asylum claims in FY 2020. This includes the proposed 18,000 refugees and more than 350,000 individuals in new asylum cases.

Future Concerns with Consent to Refugee Resettlement in Ford County:

The Letters of consent for refugee resettlement from states and localities are published on the U.S. State Department's Website for the public to view. Will this be a magnet for immigrants and illegal aliens to settle in Ford County as they may perceive we are a sanctuary for refugees?

- Each fiscal year under the Trump Administration, refugee admissions have dropped. If new leadership is elected or policies change, we could see an increase in refugee admissions.
- Refugee resettlement in Ford County will continue to tap into limited resources, funding, and service providers.

Safety

Proper controls are vital, as many refugees come from countries that are known sources of terrorism or lack the modern recordkeeping to help us identify their nationality. Law enforcement has apprehended a number of alleged terrorists in recent years who passed through our refugee program. Under this executive order, states and localities do not get to choose the people who come to be resettled.⁵

In Conclusion

Section 1 of the Executive Order of 13888 states: “In resettling refugees into American communities, it is the policy of the United States to cooperate and consult with State and local governments, to take into account the preferences of State governments, and to provide a pathway for refugees to become self-sufficient. These policies support each other. Close cooperation with State and local governments ensures that **refugees are resettled in communities that are eager and equipped to support their successful integration into American society and the labor force.**”

We believe that you, as Ford County Commissioners, must not accept the cost obligations and responsibilities outlined in Section 1 of President Trump’s executive order for Ford County, which is already impacted by an overwhelming responsibility for government services of an existing population.

It’s time for other much more affluent communities in Kansas to take on their fair share. Our position is unequivocal on this issue, which taxes our city and school services, and calls into question the accountability and follow-through aspects of refugee agencies. An approval of the proposal to accept refugees in Ford County does not put the citizens first or provide for the sustained quality of life in our communities. Ford County and the community of Dodge City have proudly done more than their fair share on these issues by accepting migrants, refugees, and newcomers to this county and surrounding communities for many years. We are grateful for the measures President Trump has taken to protect American citizens. We hope that Ford County will do the same.

Respectfully,

Laura Tawater, Ford County Citizen

References:

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2. Rush, Nayla. Center for Immigration Studies. Retrieved from: [cis.org/Rush](#).
3. Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services. (2011). *Refugee Children in U.S. Schools: A Toolkit for Teachers and School Personnel*. Retrieved from: [brycs.org](#).
4. Office for Civil Rights, U.S. State Department of Education. (Sep. 25, 2018). “*Education and Title VI*”. Retrieved from: [www2.ed.gov](#).
5. The White House. (Sep. 26, 2019). “*President Donald J. Trump's Humanitarian and Responsible Approach On Refugees Protects the Welfare of American Citizens.*” Retrieved from: [Whitehouse.gov](#)