



**Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.**

June 6, 2018

Dear Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives:

On June 6, 1939, a boat carrying 937 passengers, most of whom were Jewish and fleeing Nazi Germany, was turned away from the shores of the United States. Having been denied safety in the U.S., many aboard the MS St. Louis were forced to return to Europe where 254 of them were ultimately killed in the Holocaust. Each year, the American Jewish community commemorates this somber anniversary in the hope that the mistakes of our past are never repeated.

HIAS, the Jewish refugee protection agency, has resettled refugees in the United States for more than 137 years, making us the oldest refugee resettlement organization in the world. In partnership with the American Jewish community, HIAS' resettles refugees around the country and has built a network of 400 congregations committed to welcoming refugees. Our shared immigrant and refugee experiences, and teachings to "welcoming the stranger," has helped to build this large and engaged constituency.

Faith engagement is fundamental to the U.S. refugee resettlement program, now more than ever before. The world is currently facing the largest refugee crisis in recorded history, with over 65 million people forcibly displaced, including 22.5 million refugees.

However, The U.S. Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) is in crisis. In September 2017, the Administration set the refugee admissions ceiling for FY18 at a historic low of 45,000. In addition, the signing of executive orders and the implementation of bureaucratic obstacles meant to limit the number of refugee admissions have been successful, and eight months into the fiscal year, only 12,188 refugees have been resettled in the U.S. At this rate, it is unlikely that we will even come close to reaching the 45,000 ceiling, yet another clear signal that the future of this life-saving public private partnership is at risk.

The American Jewish community knows all too well what can happen when refugees are banned for their faith. As Americans, we should not allow our refugee policy to be shaped by fear.

We are concerned about the destruction of the refugee program at a time when refugees desperately need our help. We urge you to support funding for critical programs to support refugees, both here in the U.S. and internationally, and to support the resettlement of at

least 75,000 refugees next fiscal year. We also ask that you hold the Administration accountable for resettling 45,000 refugees in FY2018.

We look forward to working alongside you as we call on the Administration to ensure that the lifesaving U.S. Refugee Admissions Program remains intact. We hope you will join us as we welcome the stranger and protect the refugee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melanie Nezer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Melanie Nezer
Senior Vice President, Public Affairs