

March 24, 2022

Hon. Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We applaud your decision to grant Temporary Protected Status to Ukrainians currently in the United States, but there remain millions of refugees who are stranded after fleeing Ukraine who we must not ignore or abandon. **We ask your administration to take several necessary steps to ensure the safety of the Ukrainian people and a robust resettlement program for Ukrainian refugees within the United States.** We have a series of recommendations for your administration to accomplish this goal, which can be found below.

As you have noted, the long tradition of the United States as a leader in refugee resettlement provides a beacon of hope for persecuted people around the world.¹ Beyond this moral duty, the United States has a legal duty under our international agreements to accept refugees.² We were pleased when you lifted the historically low refugee cap—from 15,000 to 62,500—before the end of FY21, and then up to 125,000, for FY22. These actions have helped restore America’s promise to meaningfully honor our obligations.³ While this number was set during a global refugee crisis, it was before the war in Ukraine began, which demands that we revisit refugee admissions.

More than 3 million refugees have already fled their homes in Ukraine, and more than 4 million Ukrainians are expected to flee as the illegal Russian invasion continues.⁴ Humanitarian organizations have catalogued a Russian airstrike on a civilian breadline in Chernihiv,⁵ a ballistic

¹ White House Announcement, “Memorandum for the Secretary of State on the Emergency Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2021,” Apr. 16, 2021 (last visited Mar. 10, 2022). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/04/16/memorandum-for-the-secretary-of-state-on-the-emergency-presidential-determination-on-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2021/>

² *Id.*

³ Migration Policy Institute, “U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980 to Present,” (last accessed Mar. 10, 2022). <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united>

⁴ “The number of Ukrainians who've fled to Poland is equal to the population of Warsaw,” NPR, (Mar. 16, 2022). <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/16/1086687862/ukraine-refugees-warsaw#:~:text=WARSAW%2C%20Poland%20%E2%80%94%20About%203%20million,the%20world's%20worst%20refugee%20crises>.

⁵ Amnesty International, “Ukraine: Russian ‘dumb bomb’ air strike killed civilians in Chernihiv – new investigation and testimony,” (Mar. 9, 2022). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/03/ukraine-russian-dumb-bomb-air-strike-kills-civilians-in-chernihiv-new-investigation-and-testimony/> (killing 47 people on Mar. 3, 2022)

missile strike on a civilian hospital outside Vuhledar,⁶ and repeated bombardment of civilians fleeing the Russian advance on Kyiv.⁷

Russia's attacks on Ukrainian civilians, as well as members of the international press, have only worsened as their illegal invasion of Ukraine has continued to falter. Russia reportedly bombed a theater in Mariupol, where innocent civilians were sheltering, and was marked with the word "children" in huge letters which were clearly visible from the air.⁸ Recently, it has also been reported that Russian forces in Ukraine are hunting down international journalists, in an effort to kidnap and coerce them into recanting their reporting.⁹ There have even been reports that a Russian airstrike indiscriminately bombed a maternity hospital in the besieged port city of Mariupol, which wounded at least 17 people.¹⁰ Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians are internally displaced, with families sheltering in bomb shelters, basements, and subway stations to avoid Russian attacks.

Refugees who have fled Ukraine are currently housed in temporary shelters throughout European countries including Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Moldova, and Romania, many with no idea where they will go or what their lives will look like in the coming months and years. For example, reporting has indicated that cities in Poland are struggling to house and feed these refugees, in which two Ukrainians enter Poland every three seconds, and the millions of Ukrainian refugees who have already arrived in Poland would create the country's second-largest city.¹¹ Indeed, these countries face immense burdens as a result, with Europe facing its worse refugee crisis since World War II. The burden of sheltering and settling refugees cannot fall solely on European countries. America must also do its part.

America has set the refugee ceiling as high as 231,000 since the enactment of the Refugee Act of 1980. On April 16, 2021, you announced that given new "emergency refugee situation[s]" stemming from "increasing political violence, repression, atrocities, or humanitarian crises," you were revising the allocation of refugee admissions to ensure the United States was responding adequately to those developing emergency situations.¹² You also announced that, if the 15,000

⁶ Human Rights Watch, "Ukraine: Russian Assault Kills Fleeing Civilians— Continuous Shelling of Evacuation Route Suggests Laws of War Violations," (Mar. 8, 2022). <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/08/ukraine-russian-assault-kills-fleeing-civilians> (killing eight people including two children).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Andrew E. Kramer, Michael Schwartz and Eric Nagourney, "Survivors emerge from a bombed theater, but Ukraine's civilian suffering grows." NY Times (Updated Mar. 22, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/17/world/ukraine-russia-war>.

⁹ Mstyslav Chernov, "20 days in Mariupol: The team that documented city's agony," AP News (Mar. 22, 2022), <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-europe-edf7240a9d990e7e3e32f82ca351dede>.

¹⁰ Evgeniy Maloletka, "Airstrike hits Ukraine maternity hospital, 17 reported hurt," AP News, (Mar. 10, 2022). <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-europe-2bed71c00916d44ea951c5809b446db3/>

¹¹ Drew Hinshaw and Ian Lovett, "Two Ukrainian Refugees Enter Poland Every Three Seconds Right Now", Wall Street Journal, (Updated Mar. 10, 2022). <https://www.wsj.com/articles/waves-of-ukrainian-refugees-overwhelm-poland-11646856187>

¹² White House Announcement, "Memorandum for the Secretary of State on the Emergency Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2021," Apr. 16, 2021 (last visited Mar. 10, 2022). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/04/16/memorandum-for-the-secretary-of->

refugee cap was reached before the end of FY21, you would consider a declaration increasing the refugee cap as appropriate.¹³ You increased that refugee cap on May 3, 2021, from 15,000 to 62,500.¹⁴ However, our nation only resettled 11,411 individuals in FY21, the lowest since we started tracking in 1975.¹⁵ Further, we are disappointed that only 6,494 individuals have been resettled in FY22 as of February 28, 2022.

Given the foregoing facts, we respectfully request that you consider the following recommendations to address the growing international refugee crisis:

- **Commit to using your power under 8 U.S.C. 1157(b) to significantly raise the refugee admission ceiling to allow additional Ukrainian refugees to resettle in the United States during FY22, should we exhaust the refugee admissions for which Ukrainians are eligible in FY22;**
- **Ensure the FY23 refugee cap reflects needed refugee and resettlement goals in light of the war in Ukraine;**
- **Use your power under 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(42)(B) to designate persons within Ukraine, who may not be able to leave the country, as eligible for refugee status under U.S. law;**
- **Ensure that Ukrainians are eligible for Priority-3 (P-3) resettlement by the Department of State.**¹⁶ ¹⁷ This will ensure efficient processing of very similar persecution claims, expediting the refugee referral process and facilitating resettlement, especially for Ukrainians with family members already in the United States¹⁸;
- **Ensure that the already estimated 17,000 pending Lautenberg applications submitted by Ukrainians¹⁹, in addition to any new Lautenberg applications, are expedited to ensure the safety of these persecuted religious groups;**
- **Expedite relocation of Ukrainians with pending immigrant visa applications through creating a program similar to the Haitian Family Reunification Program from 2014, or the**

[state-on-the-emergency-presidential-determination-on-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2021/](#)

¹³ White House Announcement, “Statement by President Joe Biden on Refugee Admissions,” May 3, 2021 (last visited Mar. 10, 2022). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/04/16/memorandum-for-the-secretary-of-state-on-the-emergency-presidential-determination-on-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2021/>

¹⁴ White House Announcement, “Memorandum for the Secretary of State on the Emergency Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2021,” Apr. 16, 2021 (last visited Mar. 10, 2022).

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/03/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-refugee-admissions/>

¹⁵ Refugee Processing Center, “Admissions and Arrivals,” (last accessed Mar. 23, 2022).

<https://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>

¹⁶ Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, “U.S. Refugee Priorities,” (last accessed Mar. 9, 2022). <https://www.hias.org/us-refugee-priorities.>

¹⁷ Office of the Spokesperson, U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Refugee Admission Program Priority 2 Designation for Afghan Nationals,” Aug. 2, 2021 <https://www.state.gov/u-s-refugee-admissions-program-priority-2-designation-for-afghan-nationals/>.

¹⁸ Department of State, “Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2022,” Sept. 20, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/report-to-congress-on-proposed-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2022/>.

¹⁹ The Lautenberg amendment, reauthorized on March 15, 2022 when you signed into law H.R. 2471, the “Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022,” provides a pathway for members of historically persecuted religious groups from countries of the former Soviet Union to be reunited with family members in the United States.

program created for Iraqi and Syrian beneficiaries of I-130 petitions in 2016, for Ukrainians;

- Eliminate wait times for Ukrainians coming to the United States on new student visas by waiving both the 120-day advance limit on a new student visa and the 30-day limit on travel before the start date;
- Ensure that DHS uses the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) to process Ukrainian visas more efficiently; and
- Provide resettlement opportunities to asylum seekers and refugees, primarily from Afghanistan, who also reside in Ukraine.

The Statute of Liberty displays Emma Lazarus’s famous poem, partly reading: “*Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*” This sentiment still reflects the values of our nation, a symbol of freedom and opportunity to the world. Today, we have the opportunity—and the obligation—to put these words into power by welcoming these refugees with open arms.

Sincerely,



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress

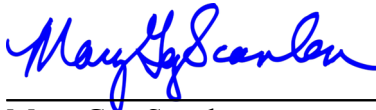


Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



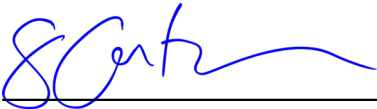
Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



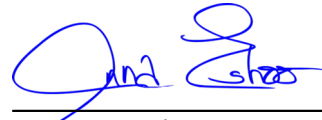
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



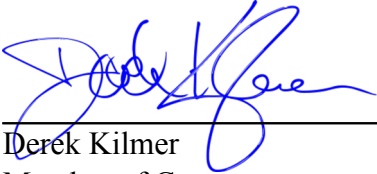
Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



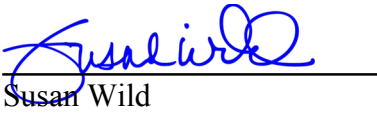
Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



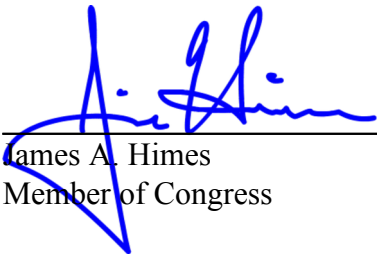
Susan Wild
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



James A. Himes
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



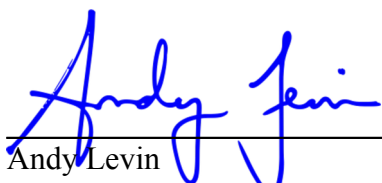
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



Andy Levin
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



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



Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



David J. Trone
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



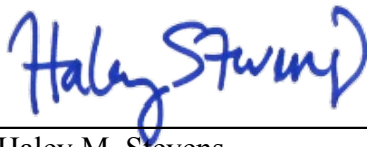
Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



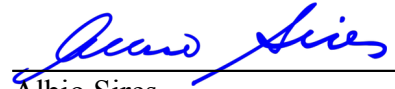
Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



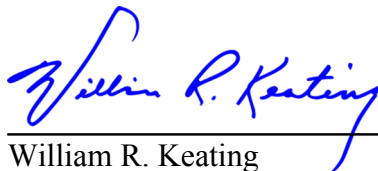
Jim Cooper
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Marie Newman
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress