



New York State Catholic Conference

2017 Issue in Brief

Issue

Support refugee resettlement agencies as refugee processes are reformed.

Background

The federal government is seeking to reduce the number of refugees entering the United States from 110,000 to 50,000 and potentially closing the borders for at least 120 days. Tens of thousands of refugees will be placed at greater risk by delaying their escape from war and persecution. This also places refugee resettlement agencies in jeopardy because their revenues are based on the number of refugees that resettle each year in the communities they serve. In 2016, 5,028 refugees were resettled in New York State, with 94 percent placed in upstate communities: Erie County - 1,800, Onondaga County - 1,242, Monroe County - 737, Albany County - 457, Oneida County - 411, and Broome County - 33. The remaining 348 refugees were placed in New York City and other counties around the State.

Furthermore, funding only covers the first 90 days that a refugee is in the United States and additional time is needed to work with newly arrived refugees. In addition, there is a need for enhanced legal counseling services for refugees to ensure they are and remain in compliance with all federal laws. Given the fluidity of immigration and refugee programs under the new Administration, additional legal assistance will help prevent issues from developing in the future for refugees.

Messages

The NYS Catholic Conference and the Council of Catholic Charities Directors support the inclusion of \$12 million in the enacted budget for FY 2018 to support refugee resettlement programs and services. Specifically, we recommend:

- \$2 million in state funding to refugee resettlement agencies to allow them to remain at capacity during the period in which refugees are prohibited from entering the country. Resettlement programs are paid \$950 from the federal government for each refugee arrival. This funding will prevent resettlement agencies from having to lay off their dedicated workforce because refugees are prohibited from entering the country.
- \$5 million to resettlement agencies allowing them to offer an additional 90 days of refugee integration services (employment, literacy, information on how to start a business and buy a home, as well as basic civic information on how to interact with police, local government, and their neighbors).
- \$5 million in state funds for programs to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate legal services to refugees. Those coming to the United States face a complex legal system that may be difficult to manage on their own.