Catholic Charities Atlanta responds to President Trump’s Executive Order

"For I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Matthew 25:38

ATLANTA, GA (January 31, 2016) – Catholic Charities Atlanta (CCA) is deeply concerned about the recent “Executive Order on Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the US” signed by President Trump. This order immediately halts the national refugee resettlement program for all refugees, dramatically reduces the ceiling for all refugee arrivals to 50,000 for the government’s current fiscal year, and bans all Syrians from the U.S. refugee program indefinitely.

As a Catholic Charities agency, we welcome refugee families that come to the United States to start their lives again in safety and dignity. It is closely tied to our identity and our values as Catholics and Americans to welcome vulnerable refugee families, regardless of their nationality or religion. The U.S. resettlement program has its historical underpinnings in the actions of the Catholic Church and other faith communities. Churches, synagogues and other communities of faith continue to stand in partnership to help refugees of all faiths find safety and hope as they start their lives as new Americans. Refugee resettlement is the living embodiment of the religious commitment to “welcome the stranger.”

Vanessa Russell, CCA CEO, reminds us that “the Catholic Church believes that immigrants and refugees are among the most vulnerable in our society. Many of our brothers and sisters are being persecuted because of their faith. They deserve our care and protection.”

The U.S. provides this care and protection through the Refugee Act of 1980. Refugees are the most rigorously screened migrant population coming into America. This screening happens before they ever set foot in our country. With the security measures currently in place, law enforcement and the Department of State are ensuring our safety and protecting our tradition of welcoming those fleeing violence.
In addition to the protection that the refugee program offers, it also brings in new community members who are contributing members of our society. Ninety-four percent of refugees participating in Catholic Charities Atlanta’s early self-sufficiency program are paying their own bills and paying taxes less than 180 days after arriving here in the United States.

Georgia welcomes nearly 3,000 refugees each year and those refugees contribute to our state’s economy and to our communities in significant ways. They work in some of our state’s most vital industries including hospitality, food processing, and manufacturing.

We are currently facing the worst refugee crisis since World War II. There are 21.3 million refugees worldwide, and over half of them are under the age of 18. (UNHCR) Less than 1% are resettled in a third country like the United States each year. The dramatic reduction in U.S. refugee admissions recently announced reduces that number even further.

In his address to Congress in September 2015, Pope Francis reminded us all to “treat others with the same passion and compassion with which we want to be treated. Let us seek for others the same possibilities which we seek for ourselves. Let us help others to grow, as we would like to be helped ourselves...The yardstick we use for others will be the yardstick which time will use for us.” Catholic Charities Atlanta remains in solidarity with those we serve.

Let us not forget that our nation’s most iconic symbol of freedom, the Statue of Liberty, has these words inscribed on her pedestal:

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free... .”

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If you would like to donate to help Catholic Charities Atlanta continue our important work, please click here: https://give.catholiccharitiesatlanta.org/donate-now.

If you are interested in volunteering your time, we have several opportunities available including academic mentoring, refugee youth mentoring, and English language instruction. Please visit our volunteer page for full details at: https://catholiccharitiesatlanta.org/volunteer/.

For more information:

- USCCB Taking Points
- Text of the Executive Order
- USCRI Refugee Screening Process
- CRSA Fact Sheet: Refugee and Immigrants in Georgia
About Catholic Charities Atlanta

Catholic Charities Atlanta (CCA) is an advocate and friend for people facing adversity. The common thread among the people CCA serves is that they are facing a life crisis – alone and often frightened. CCA helps them, according to their needs, with professional mental health counseling, life skills, parenting and literacy education, housing counseling and financial literacy, transitioning services for those starting a new life in the Atlanta area, immigration legal services for those who have been victimized and abandoned as well as case management for Veterans in crisis. The tangible benefits of these services are real and measurable. The intangibles are mercy, dignity and restoration of self-sufficiency and confidence.

Since 1953, CCA has provided help and created hope for over one million people in need in the Atlanta and North Georgia community.

For more information about Catholic Charities, please visit catholiccharitiesatlanta.org or call 404.920.7759.