



State of South Carolina

Office of the Governor

NIKKI R. HALEY
GOVERNOR

1205 PENDLETON STREET
COLUMBIA 29201

April 21, 2015

The Honorable J. Derham Cole, Jr.
Chairman, Spartanburg County Legislative Delegation
Administration Building
Main Floor, Suite 1210
366 North Church Street
Spartanburg, South Carolina 29303

Dear Chairman Cole,

In recent weeks, there have been many questions and concerns from you, members of South Carolina's federal delegation, and citizens from Spartanburg County regarding the resettlement of international refugees into the Spartanburg area. These questions have centered around the types and numbers of individuals allowed to enter our communities, the state's authority to accept or reject individuals, and the role of the Governor's Office and General Assembly in this resettlement process. Although relevant cabinet agencies will send more detailed explanations to address each of your questions, I feel that it is necessary to explain South Carolina's role in resettlement and my thoughts on this issue.

As part of the United States of America's humanitarian mission, South Carolina, along with 48 other states, has proudly welcomed refugees from around the world as a participant in the United States' Refugee Resettlement Program since 1975. Since 2000, we have accepted over 1,700 of these legal immigrants into our communities, businesses, and churches from two dozen countries such as Burma, Vietnam, and Iraq. These people are in danger of losing their lives in their home countries for things such as aiding U.S. troops as translators or guides, membership of a religious minority, or regional war or genocide. These individuals, identified in areas of conflict around the world, make application to the U.S. Department of State, are screened and vetted by the Department of Homeland Security, and are supported upon their arrival by local families and non-profit organizations to ensure their success and integration.

The South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) administers part of the public aid by coordinating with local non-profits that support these refugees upon arrival and providing temporary assistance derived from federal grants for refugee resettlement. DSS does not make decisions related to the selection of individuals or timing of their relocation. The selection, screening, and vetting process is performed by federal agencies and the local supporting non-

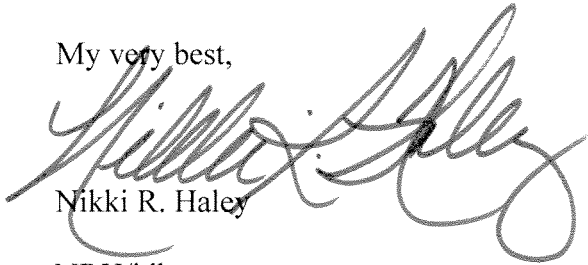
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profit. While DSS does have the opportunity to comment annually on each non-profit's plan, the agency's direct authority is limited to its administration of the federal assistance program.

I am as troubled as you are by reports earlier this year of congressional testimony that indicate some recent immigrants from Syria may not have been effectively screened by the Department of Homeland Security. Ultimately, the strength of this resettlement program and our communities' willingness to accept such immigrants is based on assurances that our communities will remain safe. Accordingly, I am requesting that the U.S. Department of State provide greater transparency in the vetting process and renewed assurances about the security risks of individuals and this program as a whole. Just as we cannot allow fear to erode America's place in the world as accepting of immigrants who chose to come legally and contribute as citizens, nor can we allow ineffective federal bureaucracies to put our citizens at risk.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this matter. Please let me know if I may be of further assistance on this or any other issue. God bless.

My very best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nikki R. Haley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Nikki R. Haley

NRH/jdb

cc: Members of the Spartanburg County Legislative Delegation
The Honorable Trey Gowdy