



## Montgomery County Government

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

November 24, 2015

Mr. Robert Carey  
Director, Office of Refugee Resettlement  
Administration for Children and Families  
United States Department of Health and Human Services  
901 D Street, SW  
ORR/8th Floor  
Washington, DC 20447

Dear Mr. Carey,

We are writing to you today to affirm Montgomery County, Maryland's policy to be a welcoming community to refugees from around the world, including those from Syria. We are disheartened that many governors have expressed opposition to having Syrian refugees make new homes in their states.

It is our understanding that the vetting process for determining whether a refugee may enter the United States is rigorous and takes from 18 to 24 months. It is initiated through a screening by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees or a United States Embassy (with a few limited exceptions). People who are selected for possible entry are subject to review by the National Counterterrorism Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Terrorist Screening Center, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, and the State Department. Once a refugee is approved to come to the United States, the State Department works with resettlement agencies to help the refugee find an appropriate state and city/community for relocation.

While refugee assistance is federally funded, we understand that programs are administered in partnership with states, as Maryland's is administered through the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees (MORA). Refugees are provided with interim cash and medical assistance, and assistance with securing employment and housing, with a goal of helping them to be self-sufficient. Refugees who want to come to the Washington Metropolitan Area may receive assistance and services through one of the non-profit organizations located in Silver Spring that are part of the public-private partnership with the federal Department of Health and Human Services and MORA: the ECDC African Community Center, International Rescue Committee, and Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area. While the Suburban Maryland Resettlement Center is in Silver Spring, refugees are free to live in any community they choose.

We are writing to voice our welcome and support for those who are fleeing violence, cannot safely return home, and seek nothing but safety and freedom in America. We also understand how a spirit of welcome at the local level is critical, as the long-term stability and success for refugees and their children comes from the programs and services provided at the local level, through the assistance of local non-profits, and the support of neighbors and volunteers. We are confident that refugees will continue to be appropriately screened and, if they choose to make their new home in Montgomery County, will be valued members of our community.

Sincerely,



Isiah Leggett  
County Executive



George Leventhal  
President, Montgomery County Council



Nancy Floreen  
Vice President, Montgomery County Council



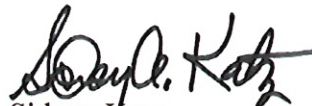
Roger Berliner  
Councilmember, District 1



Marc Elrich  
Councilmember, At-Large



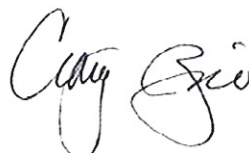
Tom Hucker  
Councilmember, District 5



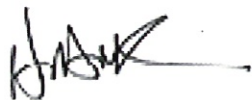
Sidney Katz  
Councilmember, District 3



Nancy Navarro  
Councilmember, District 4



Craig Rice  
Councilmember, District 2



Hans Riemer  
Councilmember, At-Large