

NEIGHBORS FOR REFUGEES

January 30, 2025

Dear Neighbors,

We had hoped that Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric was meant only for the campaign. What we've seen in the first week of this new administration has been much worse and swifter than we had anticipated. Since the inauguration, the administration has:

- **Paused the U.S. Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) which closes the border for almost all refugees, including those already approved for entry and travel to the U.S.** [Neighbors](#) expected to greet three related families from Afghanistan at JFK Airport in early- and mid-February, which would have been the happy conclusion to their multi-year vetting process overseas. There is no guidance on what this family can expect -- they are stuck in limbo in Pakistan. News sources report that entry and travel plans for 10,000 refugees were cancelled on the 21st. This "pause" will be reviewed within 90 days and may well be extended for the foreseeable future, perhaps for the entirety of this administration's time in office.



- **Forbidden the use of previously approved federal funds to support recently arrived refugees** by national and regional resettlement agencies (e.g., HIAS, The International Rescue Committee, Catholic Charities). These agencies' work will stop unless they can

raise funds from other sources. **Neighbors does not receive any federal funds**, so we can and will continue to support our clients. That said, we expect the demand for our services to increase significantly to replace or supplement reduced services from federally-funded agencies. Our ability to respond depends on financial and volunteer support.

- **Paused international aid and development spending**, which essentially **halts ongoing processing of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Afghan allies** who were promised refugee status in the US as a function of their work for the US government during the Afghan war.
- **Given** immigration officials the power to **revoke the right of those here legally to continue to reside in the U.S.**

Through these and other actions, this administration has caused many refugees to fear for their future and the safety of their families, both here and abroad.

So, what are our plans for 2025?



We will continue to support the families we welcomed over the last 12 months, including the five families who came in the last quarter of 2024 and the two families who arrived this year, before the US borders closed on January 21st. We have already committed a significant portion of our existing funding to support these families.

We will continue to welcome new refugee families -- both those already in the US who need resettlement support and those who are permitted to enter the US should the relevant “pauses” ever be lifted. We are working with our representatives in Congress to get exceptions for two families whose February travel permission and flights were cancelled by the US State Department last week. We also hope the State Department will resume the processing of SIV applications and grant refugee status to Afghans who worked with the US during the Afghan war. We owe them that.

We are providing our families with information (e.g., “Know Your Rights”) and **we have made funds available for their legal costs** so they can defend their rights and work to make their residency status permanent. Many of our families came from Afghanistan and Ukraine. While many

have permanent residency status, many are here on humanitarian parole (HP) or temporary protective status (TPS). Both HP and TPS have been targeted by this administration's Executive Orders. Neighbors wants to help them stay here in the U.S.

We will continue to provide financial assistance through our Road to Independence (R2I) grants and our Food and Housing Insecurity (FHI) grants. There are many other families who arrived over the last few years who are still struggling, and our R2I grants help to fund medical care, job training, living expenses, school supplies, and the like. Our FHI grants provide money for food, rent, and utilities. We have budgeted an increase in our grants this year, and hope to expand our grants programs as enabled by the generosity of our supporters.

We are launching a new, intensive ESL program. For any family, gainful employment is fundamental to self-sufficiency and English is key to getting a good job. Our ESL program will enhance our newest families' opportunities for better employment and to achieve financial independence as quickly as possible.

We now provide financial aid to our families for childcare. For many families, living in Westchester requires two incomes. For any family with small children, access to affordable childcare is essential to enable both parents to work. We hope that coupling this assistance with our ESL program will enable many of our stay-at-home moms to get a job and help their families make ends meet.

I hope you can help us in our fight.

You can **contact your members of Congress** to ask them to overturn this administration's abhorrent actions against people who have legal permission to be here ... and whose only "crime" is they fled persecution and violence and sought a better, safer life here in the U.S.

You can also **support Neighbors for Refugees** and other refugee organizations financially and by volunteering. Our work continues. We set a fundraising goal of \$325,000 for 2025. Given our commitments to existing families and our new initiatives, that remains our goal. We hope you can help us reach it.

Please visit our [home page](#) for more information on the current state of affairs with respect to refugees. Please share this email with friends and neighbors and follow us on social media.

With gratitude,



Frank D. Pierson
VP Development

P.S. Please consider supporting our families with a gift to [Neighbors](#).