

THE MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY SYRIAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

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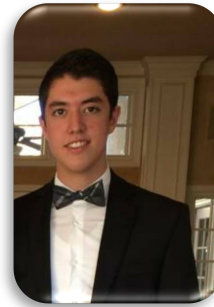
CCSR
**The Concerned Citizens
for Syrian Refugees**

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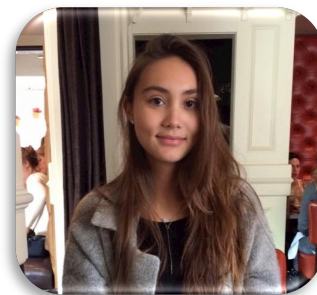
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Mission Statement

The Concerned Citizens for Syrian Refugees strongly believes that every human being is entitled to the equal right to life, freedom, and safety. The CCSR is dedicated to maintaining human rights by providing the opportunity for Syrian refugees to resettle in the United States. It is our mission to grant displaced or fleeing Syrian refugees the ability to resettle in Massachusetts by fostering relationships with host communities. We are aiding refugees in their survival of an extreme humanitarian crisis and are providing them with the tools to rebuild their lives. Our programs will allow for Syrian refugees to have access to premium health care, shelter, and life sustaining necessities in Massachusetts.

Principles

Ethics: We believe it is morally right to offer Syrian refugees the opportunity to flourish in a safe place.

Opportunity: We believe in equal opportunity for all people.

Advocacy: We serve to recognize and proclaim the voices of the underserved peoples of Syria.



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“One doesn’t ask of one who suffers: what is your country and what is your religion? One merely says, you suffer, this is enough for me, you belong to me and I shall help you.” –Louis Pasteur



Glossary

Asylum: the protection granted by a nation to someone who has left their native country as a political refugee

Discrimination: the practice of unfairly treating a person or group of people differently from other people or groups of people

Dossier: a collection of documents about a particular person, event, or subject

Extremists: a person who holds extreme or fanatical political or religious views, especially one who resorts to or advocates extreme action.

Hegemonic: influence or control over another country, a group of people, etc.

Human Rights: rights (as freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture, and execution) regarded as belonging fundamentally to all persons

Infant Mortality: the number of infants who die each year

Islamophobia: fear or hatred of Islam or Muslims

Jewish Family Services (JFS): a human service provider in Springfield, Massachusetts. Their comprehensive programs include counseling, elder services, refugee resettlement, citizenship, and community outreach

Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI): the state agency which oversees refugee resettlement in Massachusetts. The ORI's mission is to, (1) support the effective resettlement of refugees and immigrants in the state, (2) promote the full participation of these New Americans in the economic, civic, social, and cultural life of the Commonwealth, and (3) foster a public environment that recognizes the ethnic and cultural diversity of the state

Medicaid: government-based program that provides health coverage to low-income people and is one of the largest payers for health care in the United States

Moderates: professing or characterized by political or social beliefs that are not extreme

National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces: a coalition of opposition groups in the Syrian Civil War that was founded in Doha, Qatar, in November 2012

Refugee: someone who has been forced to leave a country because of war or for religious or political reasons

Refugee & Immigration Assistance Center (RIAC): a community-based, non-profit, grassroots human service agency that provides comprehensive services to refugees, asylees, and immigrants as well as the larger community. Their services include refugee resettlement, asylee case management, counseling, outreach and education, and other social services

Sunni Muslim: a member of the branch of Islam that accepts the first four caliphs (religious figure) as rightful successors to Muhammad

Superpower: an extremely powerful nation

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): is the federal nutrition program formerly known as food stamps. The program works with State agencies, nutrition educators, and neighborhood and faith-based organizations to ensure that those eligible for nutrition assistance can make informed decisions about applying for the program and can access benefits

Supplemental Security Income (SSI): United States government program that provides stipends to low-income people who are either aged (65 or older), blind, or disabled. The program provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter

Shi'ite Muslim: a member of the branch of Islam that regards Ali as the legitimate successor to Mohammed and rejects the first three caliphs

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): a program that provides temporary financial assistance for pregnant women and families with one or more dependent children. TANF provides financial assistance to help pay for food, shelter, utilities, and expenses other than medical

The International Monetary Fund: an organization of 188 countries, working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world

The United Nations: an international organization founded in 1945. It is currently made up of 193 Member States. The mission and work of the United Nations are guided by the purposes and principles contained in its founding Charter

Visa Waiver Program: this program allows citizens of specific countries to travel to the United States for tourism, business, or while in transit for up to 90 days without having to obtain a visa

Xenophobia: fear or hatred of strangers or foreigners

Women Infants and Children (WIC): a federal assistance program that grants supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk

Acronyms

BCRHHR: Boston Center for Refugee Health and Human Rights

CCSR: Concerned Citizens for Syrian Refugees

ESRP: Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GOP: Grand Old Party

ORI: Office for Refugees and Immigrants

SSI: Supplemental Security Income

SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

UDHR: 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNHRC: United Nations Human Rights Council

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USRRP: United States Refugee Resettlement Program

WIC: Women Infants and Children

Thesis

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts should permit the resettlement of Syrian refugees because it is not only the ethical course of action, but their immigration will provide measurable economic benefits as well as social and political advantages. The Concerned Citizens for Syrian Refugees' proposal requests an additional federal grant of \$16 million to the Office for Refugees and Immigrants annual budget. This grant will allow for the resettlement of 4,800 Syrian refugees in six Massachusetts counties.



Background

Over the course of the past decade, Syria has become a major focal point in the Middle East. The crisis that began in March 2011 has left 250,000 Syrians dead and 4.8 million displaced.¹

The Baath Party, currently in power in Syria, was founded in 1947 by Michel Aflaq, a teacher whose radical Arab nationalism won supporters across the region.² Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, succeeded his father, Hafiz al-Assad, after his death in 2000. The Assad family belonged to Syria's Alawite minority, a Shī'ite sect that traditionally constitutes about 10% of the Syrian population and has played a dominant role in Syrian politics since the 1960s.³ Beginning in March 2011, Assad faced a significant challenge to his rule when anti-government protests broke out in Syria, inspired by a wave of pro-democracy uprisings throughout the Middle East and North Africa, known as the Arab Spring.⁴

The government responded to the protests with overwhelming arrests, prisoner abuse, police brutality, and censorship. However, President Assad began launching large-scale military operations that involved tank use, leading to numerous civilian deaths. The violence and chaos created an environment that allowed for religious extremism. Sunni radical groups are believed to have infiltrated opposition against the current Alawite regime. In November 2012, several opposing factions came together in Doha, Qatar, to form an umbrella group in exile known as the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.⁵ Many view the Syrian conflict as two parallel civil wars: one between the regime and opposition, and the other between religious opposition of moderates and extremists.

The United States' policy in Syria aims to achieve a negotiated settlement to the conflict out of concern that a deepening humanitarian crisis will destabilize the region and terrorist

organizations might find safe haven in Syria. In August 2013, President Obama announced an additional \$195 million in humanitarian aid, which brought the cumulative U.S. humanitarian fund for the Syrian crisis to one billion dollars.⁶ However, more than 1 in 10 Syrians have been critically wounded or killed since the beginning of the war and 470,000 total deaths have been caused by the conflict.⁷ It is evident that more importantly than monetary aid, Syrians need a safe place. Of the 4.8 million Syrians displaced since 2011, America has taken in 2,290 of them. On the other hand, Turkey has accepted an estimated one million Syrian refugees.⁸

A recent study conducted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) reveals concerning conditions of Syrians refugees living outside of camps in Jordan in 2014. According to the study, two-thirds of refugees across Jordan are living below the national poverty line with less than \$40 per person each month.⁹ In Turkey, thousands of Syrians wait outside the border in hopes of resettling and escaping their country's harsh conditions. The political unrest and social turmoil has led millions of Syrians to flee in search of refuge in camps around the Middle East and Europe. Overpopulation has led to inhumane conditions within these camps -- therefore as a beacon of democracy, the United States has a global duty to provide a safe haven to these Syrians.¹⁰

Critiques Against the Resettlement of Syrian Refugees

The United States is considered a safe haven for those undergoing extreme situations in their own countries. The safety of U.S. citizens, however, must be taken into consideration in the wake of heightened threats from terrorist organizations. Many critics believe that the needs of Americans must be put first, particularly, in Massachusetts where the state recently experienced an onset of terror with the 2013 Boston Bombings. Massachusetts, in addition to the other 49 states within the U.S., should not have to give up its safety in order to extend it to a country on the opposite side of the globe.

The Dangers of Overpopulation

A recent study showed that the state of Massachusetts, with a population size of approximately 6.7 million people, is considered to be one of the more populous states in America.¹¹ As a state with a sizable population, an increase in Massachusetts' residences may create a social, economic, and political downfall.

The Tragedy of the Commons was a phenomenon coined by William Forster Lloyd, and published by ecologist Garrett Hardin in the late 1960s. The idea states that the overutilization of a resource is tied to the population density. Hardin states, "A finite world can support only a finite population."¹² Both Lloyd and Hardin emphasize that as the population increases, society has to start regulating common resources. In this case, with the addition of Syrian refugees Massachusetts would have to start conserving resources in order to minimize this tragedy.¹³

American citizens are concerned that the displaced persons as a result of the Syrian Civil War will relocate to densely populated areas in the United States, such as Massachusetts, and increase the necessity for natural resources. The U.S. will suffer from the increase in population size because of a lack of available resources.

Cost Benefit Analysis

The 2016 Obama Administration will allow for 10,000 Syrian refugees to immigrate to the United States. This will make an increase in social infrastructure, to meet the basic humanitarian needs of incoming refugees, inevitable. The unavoidable upfront costs – such as the initial refugee resettlement budget of \$582 million – cause a strain on the already weak national deficit (Appendix A).¹⁴ The United States' refugee screening process is known to take a long time. This time length may not prove to be cost effective for hosting countries like the United States.¹⁵

Economic Burden

Two major concerns in today's economy is the cost for countries taking in refugees and refugees taking jobs and social benefits away from citizens. What has taken place in Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan – major bordering countries of Syria – causes concern for American citizens. In these countries, "Syrian refugees find casual, irregular and predominantly unskilled work when they can."¹⁶ Within those bordering countries, approximately 30% of the working-age refugee population are compensated and given a variety of jobs.¹⁷ Nevertheless, increasing competition for work decreases salary levels.¹⁸

Jordan's economic situation is an example of how the influx of Syrian refugees negatively impacted citizens. Similar to many countries, Jordan has economic pressures. So far in 2016, the country has accepted a total of 630,000 refugees.¹⁹ In 2013, the Jordanian government received approximately \$81.4 million to fund the costs of enrolling 78,531 Syrian children in public schools.²⁰ An increase in funding was necessary for enrollment, and maintenance costs totaled around \$257 million in 2015.²¹ However, the outpour of funding continued. An extra \$168 million for basic health services was utilized, and an annual cost of \$62

million was allocated to shelter, housing infrastructure, and additional needs from incoming refugees like access to running water, electricity, and construction.²² The funding needed for these extra costs reached 35% of the total budget in 2015.²³ The additional costs to support basic human necessities are substantial not only in smaller areas around the world but also in larger countries within Europe and North America. These investments on social infrastructure may have a negative effect on a country's long-term finances.²⁴ In the 2014 Needs Assessment Review (NAR) on the Syrian crisis' impact on Jordan, it states that the crisis affected the country's public finances, increased the trade deficit, and created monetary losses generated in specific economic sectors.²⁵ Suffering for three years under the Jordanian governments' insubstantial fiscal position, the spillover of refugees into Jordan led to an increase in the country's debt. Additionally, the government redistributed money to meet the needs of an increased population. As a result, Jordan's GDP suffered a decline of 2% in 2013 and ultimately reduced its overall growth by 3-3.5%. Jordan's economy will not be able to sustain itself due to the worsening Syrian crisis.²⁶

Long-term finances are not the greatest concern for U.S. citizens. Their apprehension stems from possibility that jobs and social benefits will be taken away from them and granted to incoming refugees. Economist Jeffrey Sachs states, "The distribution consequences come in two kinds."²⁷ The first distribution consequence is the increase in the level of competition for jobs; more individuals looking for work minimizes the workforce income, because it signals an increase in the amount of individuals who can work at a lower wage.²⁸ The second consequence with admitting refugees is providing them with social benefits. Refugees are legally required to have social services for a period of time, but due to their inability to receive a significantly substantial income, the taxation will fall on U.S. citizens.²⁹

The United States is one of the largest contributors of aid to the Syrian crisis; therefore, most critics do not find it necessary to in thousands of refugees. Although Syrians are seeking refuge, these individuals, in most cases, do not want to immigrate to the U.S. permanently. While an added labor force may have positive benefits, it is important to keep in mind that the U.S. may not be able to provide the necessary tools and opportunities for refugees to work in their previous field. Not being able to work in one's profession may cause refugees to leave the U.S. once the conflict is over, reducing the United States' return on investment.

National Security Dispute

For decades the United States has become a target of extremist groups such as ISIS and the Taliban. Following the September 11 attacks, the United States increased national security, altering the way citizens viewed national safety. On April 15, 2013 another terrorist attack hit close to home. During the Boston Marathon, two bombs subsequently went off near the finish line killing three individuals: a child, a woman, and a graduate student at Boston University, and left hundreds of other victims injured.³⁰ Recent attacks, in Europe have created concern for American citizens about any immigrant, or displaced person looking to seek refuge in the United States. Pressure placed on the Obama Administration to allow more Syrian Refugees into the U.S. is stimulating negative feedback from the GOP. Many fear admitting refugees after the Paris attacks. Two of the men involved were able to enter Europe, from Greece, by illegally representing themselves as Syrian migrants.³¹ Additionally, ISIS made a statement threatening countries that members would be disguised amongst homeless refugees pouring into European nations. It is hard to understand the U.S. federal governments' plans to move forward with the screening process and so many will continue to question it.

In the state of Massachusetts, Governor Charlie Baker stated that he was “not interested in accepting refugees from Syria.”³² With the security concerns after the Paris attacks, Governor Baker, along with 30 other state governors opposed the resettlement of Syrian refugees in their states. Governor Baker states that he wants more insight into how the federal government plans to screen and process Syrian refugees into the United States.³³ Additionally, Governor Baker stated that his primary concern is for the welfare of Massachusetts’ residents. He would like more details about who will be paying for the refugees, where they will be relocated, housed, and how they will be cared for.³⁴

Potential Pandemic

Another major concern is the health risks posed prior to allowing refugees into Massachusetts. The United States cannot afford to have a pandemic due to refugees introducing new viruses. In 2014, the U.S. saw the escalation of the Ebola outbreak when a Doctors Without Borders aid - with a confirmed diagnosis of Ebola- returned to New York City after working abroad in Guinea.³⁵ The initial patient was cured of the virus after being quarantined and treated for the infection. Several other cases of the viral infection continued to appear. On October 10, 2014, another “healthcare worker at Texas Presbyterian Hospital who provided care for the index patient tested positive for Ebola.”³⁶ This epidemic proved to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) that those exposed to the infection had a high-risk of transmission, and in many instances the patient died from the inability to quickly treat the virus.³⁷ If a Syrian refugee contracted a disease, such as Ebola, the screening may fail detect the disease in its early stages. Syrian refugees who are prone to illness may contract another infection that could essentially create further outbreak in the United States.

Benefits of Resettling Syrian Refugees

Although some may disagree, there are many advantages for allowing Syrian refugees into Massachusetts. As one of the original colonies of our great nation, citizens need to recall that our commonwealth was founded by the persecuted and built on the backbone of immigrants. Therefore, it is Massachusetts' duty to lend its support by welcoming Syrian refugees in need.

Economic Benefits

For a society capable of supporting an influx in its population, accepting refugees can have a positive effect on the economy. Overall, "Refugees provide an increased demand for goods and services" through their newly developed purchasing power.³⁸ Refugees can also revitalize "communities that otherwise have a declining population."³⁹ This is evident in Germany, where a recent study conducted by Hamburg's World Economy Institute found that their "birth rate is now the lowest in the world and is declining faster than any other industrial country."⁴⁰ By pledging to accept over 800,000 Syrian refugees, Germany will be able to support their aging population while expanding their economy. Once employed, refugees in Germany actually contribute *more* in taxes than they obtain in governmental support. A recent study by the ZEW economic institute found that, "On average in 2012, foreigners in Germany paid around €3,300 more in taxes than they received in state contributions," a total surplus of nearly €22 billion."⁴¹ This monetary surplus exemplifies the positive impact refugees have on supporting the population and contributing to economic growth.

Even cities here in the United States have experienced economic gains due to the reception of refugees; Cleveland being a prime example. In 2012, the refugee services agencies in Cleveland "spent about \$4.8 million" in order to help "refugees get established in the area."⁴² However, "the economic [benefit] these refugees had on the community weighed in at about \$48

million, roughly 10 times the initial resettlement costs.”⁴³ Proving that similar to the Bhutanese, Ukrainian, Burmese, and Somalis of Cleveland, the addition of Syrian refugees can economically stimulate the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Since the Obama Administration is planning to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees in 2016, it prove beneficial for Massachusetts to embrace this notion by serving as a model for other states, exemplifying the benefits refugees can provide.⁴⁴

Balancing the Scale

While Syrian refugees are boosting the economy of developed countries, many of the countries surrounding Syria do not have the resources needed to support the major increase in their population. As one of the largest superpowers of the world, it is the United States’ responsibility to lessen the burden for these underdeveloped countries. Due to trading partnerships, lessening the burden would only strengthen the stability of the United States’ economy. Refugees in Jordan have “strained the country’s limited water supply.”⁴⁵ Countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt are taking on hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of refugees (Appendix B).⁴⁶ The increase in the population is putting a major strain on these countries’ natural resources, leaving less for their original population. As a large, established country with a greater abundance of resources, it is our duty to help these countries by alleviating the strain on their economy.

By lessening the burden on these countries, we will be able to secure their stability, and prevent further ISIS expansion. Greece is currently “in the sixth year of the deepest recession ever witnessed by a developed economy.”⁴⁷ Greece’s fragile economy is incapable of supporting a large increase in its population. As a country that relies heavily on tourism, the influx of refugees is taking away a large portion of that industry. Weak economies lead to unstable environments, and are ideal for terrorist organizations such as ISIS to exploit. It is in the interest

of the United States' economy and national security to relieve the economic burden placed on struggling countries, to stabilize neighboring countries economies, and to confine the expansion of terrorist organizations.

Bolstering National Security

Accepting Syrian refugees will ultimately prove safer for U.S. national security. Contrary to the American notion that refugees are terrorists, the majority of refugees are innocent civilians. The perception of Syrians as terrorists stems largely from the Islamophobia rooted in American ideology from tragedies such as September 11, the Paris attacks, and even closer to home: The Boston Marathon Bombings. However, “none of the 9/11 attackers was a refugee” while “seven of the eight known terrorists suspected in the Paris attacks were citizens of European countries.”⁴⁸ Contrary to what some believe, the Boston Bombers were not refugees or Syrian. They were the children of political asylees, and naturalized citizens of the United States. Since September 11, 2001 the U.S. has resettled 784,389 refugees and of these “only three have been convicted of planning terrorist attacks on targets *outside* of the United States,” none of which were successfully carried out.⁴⁹ For every 261,463 refugees there has been one *failed international* terrorism-planning conviction. In comparison, during 2014 “about 1 in every 22,541 Americans committed murder,” showing that everyday American citizens pose more of a threat to our safety than refugees.

Entering the United States through refugee processing is one of the hardest ways to enter the country. Refugees undergo a rigorous screening process, run by the United Nations, that lasts a minimum of 18-24 months.⁵⁰ After the United Nations clears an individual as a refugee, individual countries, such as the United States, conduct their own refugee screening processes. This process “generally includes multiple interviews, background checks and an extensive cross-

referencing process that tests refugee's stories against others and accounts from sources on the ground in their home country.”⁵¹ These refugees may “also have their retinas scanned and have their fingerprints lifted.”⁵² The intensity of the refugee process makes it highly unlikely for national security threats to enter the country this way. Currently, “if you're a citizen of one of 38 mostly European countries, including France and Belgium,” it is unnecessary for one to apply for a visa, meaning one can purchase a plane ticket and come to the U.S. instantaneously.⁵³ It would be easier for a terrorist to enter the U.S. this way. Refugee background checks strengthen the United States’ national security more than the process of entrance for the average European tourist.

One of the biggest advantages of allowing Syrian refugees into Massachusetts is that it counters ISIS narratives about an uncaring West.⁵⁴ ISIS uses negative rhetoric in order to persuade refugees that the West is prejudice against them. President Barack Obama said that “Prejudice and discrimination helps ISIS and undermines our national security.”⁵⁵ Therefore, the best way to the fight that narrative is by showing Syrians, and the rest of the Middle East, that the U.S. and other western countries are sympathetic to the struggles they have endured. Massachusetts’ resettlement of Syrian refugees will begin to resolve relations between the people of the Middle East and the West, which will prevent the radicalization of persecuted groups. By opening its doors, the United States can stop the momentum of extremism and persecution.

Ethical Considerations

Refugee Camps

One of the most famous stories of a Syrian refugee that swept the nation was the story of a two-year-old Syrian boy named Aylan Kurdi who washed ashore in Turkey as a result of his family's journey across the Mediterranean Sea fleeing Syria.⁵⁶ Aylan is just one of the many Syrians who has suffered as a result of the Syrian refugee crisis. With U.S. intervention, we can prevent events like this from occurring in the future.

To understand why Syrian refugees, such as Aylan Kurdi, are fleeing their country, it is imperative to understand the conditions that they are forced to live in. As a result of the mass migration of Syrian refugees, neighboring countries such as Jordan and Turkey have been burdened by a large influx of Syrian refugees and are forced to help with minimal resources. Many of these camps are located in areas that lack sufficient resources to adhere to the needs of the refugees. Meanwhile, the rampant growth of refugees at these camps has continued to deplete the amount of resources and has worsened the living conditions. Nada Sidani, a registered emergency nurse who works with Syrian refugees in Canada, shared her insights on the conditions of the camps and clinics her patients lived in.⁵⁷ “At the vaccination clinic, the women would wrap their babies in plastic bags because they don’t have the means to keep the baby dry in a tent where the water seeps from the top,” Sidani described.⁵⁸ She continued discussing the atrocities of the living conditions; furthering adding “How can I describe to you in words the smell of urine and feces?...How can I describe to you what it means to live 24/7 in temperatures of four to five degrees Celsius, the temperature we use to preserve our meat and cheese in the fridge.”⁵⁹ The article mentions that “in the refugee camps, families sometimes live for years in cramped quarters under tents meant for temporary residence.”⁶⁰ Sidani describes the conditions

as “I.”⁶¹ This is just one of the many appalling accounts of what it is like to live in a refugee camp.

The United States as a Superpower

As a world leading superpower, the United States has the ability to set an international agenda for aid and be an influential leader in the efforts for global security. Through diplomacy and soft power, the U.S. ended the Cold War. Therefore, fighting for refugees should not be perceived as a daunting task. In the Post World War II era, the Cold War influenced a new world order and induced the stabilization of new universal principles and foreign policies. Laws, policies and organizations such as The United Nations, The International Monetary Fund and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights were all incorporated into our society. With these policies in place, the U.S. became a major contributor to global development through aid and the prevention of potential conflicts. However, there is no contesting that the U.S. has the ability and resources to do more.

The world’s wealthiest 1 percent controls 50 percent of the global wealth, and a large fraction of that wealth reside in the United States.⁶² According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), “The United States has the most technologically powerful economy in the world, with a per capita GDP of \$54,800.”⁶³ On the other hand, Syria’s economy is deteriorating as a result of the civil war. In 2011, Syria’s GDP was \$5,100 per capita.”⁶⁴ Since then, Syria has been unable to accurately estimate its GDP due its the large number of displaced citizens, war-torn towns, and damaged infrastructure.

The United States has an immense amount of wealth, and the disparity of wealth between the United States and Syria is clear. While Syria plummets due to the effects of civil war, infant mortality, famine and disease, the United States leads in innovation, political authority,

economics, and military defense.⁶⁵ With all that the United States has to offer as a nation with such fiscal power, it is immoral to disregard the Syrian refugees' call for help.

The United States was one of the first countries to help charter the United Nations (UN). The U.S. has always played an integral role in the affairs of the UN and foreign policy. Due to this, other nations look to the U.S. as a prime model in times of need or crisis. As a superpower, the U.S. has the finances and the authority to make great impacts in impoverished countries and in the lives of refugees. The U.S. has strong humanitarian reasons to aid and should not think of this as a burden, but as philanthropy and self-help. America is not successful solely because of the efforts of one group of people, but by the efforts made by an assortment of all different types of people, with different backgrounds, religions, cultures, and socioeconomic statuses. Every part of this world has played some sort of intrinsic role in the development of the United States. Much like in the human body, when one organ is not functioning properly, it impacts the organs around it. If we do not help Syria, we are only hurting ourselves and since we have the power to help Syrian refugees, we must act. Helping Syria is helping the world.

Universal Human Rights

The 20th century was a pivotal moment that played an essential role in the current outlook of world affairs. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) established an international norm that all nations must abide by a code of human rights that justifiably belong to everyone. Refugees have rights under international law that states cannot violate. Article 14 states that, "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries' asylum from persecution."⁶⁶ Refugees are allowed the right to seek protection and to be placed in any nation. In doing so, these refugees should feel safe and accepted. Article 13 affirms this right, saying, "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of

each state... Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”⁶⁷ The United States has actively perpetuated these rights and should continue to abide by them to prevent human rights violations.

Massachusetts as the Ethical Option

We interviewed Jennifer Sato, a data coordinator at the Boston Center for Refugee Health and Human Rights (BCRHHR). The BCRHHR is a non-resettlement agency, which seeks to help with conflict and trauma. The BCRHHR’s goal is to improve the quality of life for survivors of torture and their communities; a goal that the entire state of Massachusetts should aim to achieve.⁶⁸

Critics, and other opposing forces, who have been desensitized to international global concerns and who are less socially conscious of this crisis, lack a deep understanding of why people seek refuge and migrate. Sato stressed that the main reason why many people are so reluctant about the idea of allowing Syrian refugees into Massachusetts stems from false impressions. There is a huge misunderstanding as to why people seek refuge. People flee their countries in search for one thing: safety. More than 4 million Syrians are forced to flee their country in search of protection.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, there is a 40% suicide rate amongst Syrian children.⁷⁰ “Refugees just want a safe place to recover and build a peaceful life,” Sato added.⁷¹ Many of the Syrian refugees suffer from different forms of psychological and physical traumas due to war, and need proper health care in order to recover. It is imperative to help people who suffer from psychological traumas because it will benefit our society. “When you don’t help people who have suffered from torture and trauma, these people don’t assimilate well, and if they have children, it leads to vicarious or trans-generational trauma where anxiety and depression is

passed down to the children.”⁷² Allowing Syrian refugees into the commonwealth means they have access to an array of health professionals who can help them.

Massachusetts has a large medical presence. This state is known for having prestigious health programs such as Physicians for Human rights, and known for having ample amounts of accredited medical professionals, as well as diverse settings. There are 3,995 hospitals in the United States and 80 of those hospitals are in Massachusetts.⁷³ Two of those hospitals are rated second for Psychiatry, Neurology and Neurosurgery; the best types of hospitals to deal with mental health.⁷⁴ Massachusetts is one of the few states that tops charts in leading health care in the United States. If we resettle Syrian refugees in locations that do not adhere to their needs, they will not recover. Resettling Syrian refugees into our commonwealth will not only save lives, but it will allow these refugees to attain the help they need to make a meaningful recovery, providing them with a greater ability to assimilate into society. “We have a crisis and we are one of the best states to help,”⁷⁵ Sato added. Massachusetts has what it needs to make a powerful impact in the lives of Syrian refugees and should use its power to help them.

Countering Discrimination

The integration of Syrian refugees needs to be approached strategically and holistically to provide a successful consolidation of the refugees. The most pervasive and contentious issues of this matter deal with hate. With the question of whether Syrian refugees should be allowed into our commonwealth, two words come to mind: Xenophobia and Islamophobia. In a number of nations, there are general anti-immigrant notions. Massachusetts has a history of protecting the regard to any human life. The Puritans fled to Massachusetts avoiding persecution in England, runaway and freed slaves arrived in Massachusetts to live freely, and more recently, Somali refugees who have fled the Somali civil war, have found sanctuary in Massachusetts. Therefore,

allowing Syrian refugees into Massachusetts is accustomed and continues to perpetuate an ethos of welfare by withstanding from xenophobia.

Islamophobia stems from the misconception that Islam breeds terrorism. People fear that allowing Syrian refugees would allow terrorists to enter the United States. As discussed in *Benefits of Resettling Syrian Refugees*, people fail to realize that these acts of terrorism have no correlation to the religion of Islam or its followers. This is because in the context of Islam, anyone who murders another person is not a true follower of Islam. While Islamophobia is an issue for some Americans, Massachusetts is tolerant of many religions. In a recent poll, 59% of Massachusetts's residents agree that the U.S. should accept Syrian Refugees (Appendix C).⁷⁶ Additionally, a survey we conducted revealed that 74% of Boston University students agree that Syrian refugees should resettle in Massachusetts (Appendix D). Linking Syrian refugees to terrorism is a false and dangerous association. The association is irrational and it undermines our constitutional beliefs of innocence until proven guilty. As Jennifer Sato stated, "We shouldn't be worried about terrorism. We should worry about the fact that we are putting character to Islam and Muslims and letting our fears lead us to become xenophobic and racist."⁷⁷ As a state that has a history of valuing different people, it is important for Massachusetts not to succumb to hate by continue to help Syrian refugees.

The best way to confront issues of hate before the Syrian refugees come into our Commonwealth is to continue having discussions about race, discrimination, empathy, privilege, and power. Classes on these topics should be instituted in all Massachusetts school systems as well as work settings. Such classes will help us understand our privilege and the unrest refugees face, will make us comprehend our potential as a superpower, the importance of human rights, why Massachusetts is the ideal, and why discrimination is not a daunting factor.

Legal Considerations

Legal Precedents

There are many legal precedents already in place that permit the entry of refugees in the United States. The Refugee Act of 1980 was a bipartisan supported law created to “provide a permanent and systematic procedure for the admission...of refugees of special humanitarian concern to the U.S., and to provide comprehensive and uniform provisions for the effective resettlement and absorption of those refugees.”⁷⁸ The act was an amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act. The law was designed so that refugees could achieve economic self-sufficiency in the United States after having to leave their livelihoods behind. The refugees that immigrate to the United States are not undocumented. They must advance through the same legal procedures that any “economic migrant” must endure before arriving at America’s borders. A refugee, as defined by Section 101(a)(42) of the *INA*, “is a person who cannot or will not return to his or her home country because of a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin.”⁷⁹ Asylum seekers are those whose states of citizenship remain unassessed. Unlike asylum seekers, refugees are immigrants that have had their application processed and are entitled to international protection and assistance.⁸⁰ Refugees are in a position where they have to leave their homes, families, careers, and possessions because they fear for their lives.

The Refugee Act of 1980 requires the United States to take greater action than simply accommodating displaced persons. The law obligates the U.S. to house Syrian refugees and provide them with the necessary tools to thrive, for however long they remain in the United States. It is a legal framing of the United States’ duty to provide safe harbor for refugees. Several

of its tenants – such as cash assistance, placing employable refugees in appropriate jobs, and English language training – legally mandate the United States’ responsibility to aid people in crisis.⁸¹ The act also raised the limitation from 17,400 to 50,000 refugees admitted each fiscal year.⁸² The ceiling for refugee admittance is 70,000, and the United States never approaches it, despite the fact that there are more than four million Syrian refugees in need of assistance.⁸³

Ethics and the Law Collide

The United States and Syria are both signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).⁸⁴ The two nations share an integral belief, that human rights belong to all people. However, it seems that no nation can fully abide by the laws of the UDHR, in the sense that each nation earmarks rules they choose not to follow. Complying with the circumstances that Syrian refugees face contradicts what the U.S. stands for. It is a legal and moral right that every human being has a basic equal worth. Since, Syria voted for the UDHR, in the case of the refugee crisis, it is our duty as a co-signatory to help Syrians.

Secretary of State John Kerry asserted that nations that fail to abide to human rights collapse.⁸⁵ In an article, Kerry writes, “Governments that protect human rights and are accountable to their citizens are more secure, bolster international peace and security, and enjoy shared prosperity with stable democratic countries around the world... Countries that fail to uphold human rights can face economic deprivation and international isolation.”⁸⁶ In this passage, Kerry is suggesting that Syria is at risk of total disarray.⁸⁷ Thus, it is important to act in the case of Syria and Syrian refugees when agreed upon rights are breached.

A Constitutional Responsibility

Massachusetts would only be adhering to constitutional law if it were to accept and resettle additional Syrian refugees. Several state officials have denounced the admittance of

Syrian refugees due to the devastation stemming from the Paris attacks. It is natural to react to domestic threats, but as a nation, fear cannot impede the humanitarian duty America has to unprotected Syrian refugees. So far, thirty-one states have protested the admission of Syrian refugees: Massachusetts, Alabama, Arizona, Michigan, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire are just a few.⁸⁸ A few states have not yet committed to a stance, but other states, such as Delaware, have remained open to allowing Syrian refugee resettlement. Delaware's governor, Jack Markell, made a moving statement when rationalizing why Delaware would continue to accept Syrian refugees; "It is unfortunate that anyone would use the tragic events in Paris to send a message that we do not understand the plight of these refugees, ignoring the fact that the people we are talking about are fleeing the perpetrators of terror."⁸⁹

In any case, state governments do not have the power to bar Syrian refugees. That power rests with the federal government, and through the Refugee Act of 1980, the federal government has spoken in the favor of Syrian refugees. American University law professor Stephen I. Vladeck phrased it this way: "Legally, states have no authority to do anything because the question of who should be allowed in this country is one that the Constitution commits to the federal government."⁹⁰ Additionally, once an individual has been lawfully admitted into the United States they are free to live in *any* state they please.⁹¹ As long as refugees comply with the federal immigration requirements, a state cannot restrict their movement. States only have the governmental power to be uncooperative in the resettlement of refugees: denying them housing or refusing to pass along federal money, etc. If states were to blockade Syrian refugees, it would render them vulnerable to legal challenges deriving from the Constitution.

An Unlawful Bill

As it stands, the Obama Administration is a proponent for the admittance of Syrian refugees into the United States. The executive branch stated that logistics are underway to increase the number of Syrian refugees to 10,000 in the 2016 fiscal year.⁹² However, there is staunch opposition from both Democrats and Republicans. On November 19, 2015 the bill H.R. 4038 passed effortlessly through the House of Representatives, with votes from both Republicans and Democrats.⁹³ The bill is titled, American Security against Foreign Enemies Act (American SAFE Act) and it is now approved legislation that would make it increasingly more difficult for Syrian refugees to enter the United States legally.⁹⁴ The bill was a direct counter to the Obama Administration's new refugee policy, and would require that in addition to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) screening, refugees would also need a background check conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).⁹⁵ FBI Director James Comey has expressed deep concerns about the bill. Comey has told administration and congressional officials that "The legislation would make it impossible to allow any refugees into the U.S., and could even affect the ability of travelers from about three dozen countries that are allowed easier travel to the U.S. under the visa waiver program."⁹⁶ The Obama Administration has vowed to veto this bill, but much has been said already through its passing of the House. The process for admitting refugees is arduous and lengthy- sometimes taking up to two years just to vet them- and this bill would only prolong the process and ensure that refugees are forced to seek safety elsewhere.

The America SAFE Act was manifested specifically for Syrian and Iraqi refugees and therefore has rooted itself in discriminatory and xenophobic unlawfulness. The Equal Protection Clause, under the 14th amendment, affirms that states cannot discriminate based on "protected

characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, or alienage.”⁹⁷ “These factors are so seldom relevant to the achievement of any legitimate state interest, that laws grounded in such considerations are deemed to reflect prejudice and antipathy,” the Supreme Court explained.⁹⁸

The Equal Protection Clause is crucial to the protection of the civil rights of all people, *including* Syrian refugees. States are in direct violation of the 14th amendment when they exclude Syrian refugees from their territories or deny them benefits made available to refugees from other nations. This kind of discriminatory tactic aligns itself with the outdated practices of early America. The United States has made strides in immigration policy over the last hundred years. The days of anti-immigrant sentiment have passed and laws like the Chinese Exclusion Act have been repealed and labeled unconstitutional. The passing of the H.R. 4038 would be a grievous regression of our nation’s societal and legal advancement. We would be failing ourselves as a nation built on equality, and our Syrian neighbors, who are in desperate need of legal American assistance.

The Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program

Boston, MA 02215
APRIL 2016

The Concerned Citizens for Syrian Refugees urges the state of Massachusetts to allow the resettlement of Syrian refugees within its borders. This will be achieved through the creation of the Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program and cooperation between the United States Federal Government, the Massachusetts State Government, and the United Nations.

The Syrian Civil War has caused a massive influx of refugees into western countries. We urge the United States to acknowledge the 4.8 million Syrians who have fled their country due to the extensive conflict.⁹⁹ It is Massachusetts' duty, as a state with the ability to provide safe refuge, to resettle Syrian refugees.

Phase 1: Identifying Syrian refugees to come to the United States

The United States will work with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the United States Refugee Resettlement Program (USRRP) to identify refugees from Syria in various countries such as Lebanon and Greece.

Phase 2: Processing Syrian refugees overseas

All qualified refugees will be arranged for processing in committed visa offices in nearby Middle Eastern/European cities such as Beirut and Lesbos.

Phase 3: Transportation to the United States

Syrian refugees will be transported to the United States via privately chartered aircraft, with assistance from the military.

Phase 4: Welcoming into the United States

Upon arrival in the United States, refugees will be received by a Department of State official and a sponsoring resettlement affiliate. They may also be welcomed by a family member or friend.

The final verification of identity will take place during this phase. All refugees will be examined for foreign diseases once they arrive in the United States, and treatment will be offered to any refugee who is ill upon arrival.¹⁰⁰

Phase 5: Transportation to Massachusetts

Depending on the distance between Massachusetts and the area in which refugees enter the United States, Syrian refugees will be transported via aircraft or train to Boston, Massachusetts. Once in Boston, the refugees will be welcomed by officials from the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI). These officials will explain to the refugees their itinerary, and direct them towards transportation to their designated county. They will then be taken to refugee centers in those counties to begin assimilating into their new society.

Phase 6: Settlement and Community Integration

Syrian refugees will arrive at their designated community refugee center, where they will be immediately provided with essential services and long-term resettlement support to ensure their successful integration into American society. “Refugees will then be taken to their assigned housing, which will have basic furnishings, appliances, climate-appropriate clothing, and some of the food typical of the Syrian culture.”¹⁰¹ All refugees will participate in mandatory weekly classes at their refugee center, where they will be provided with the proper tools to familiarize themselves with American society.

Number of Syrian Refugees Resettling in Massachusetts

Massachusetts can find a solution to the problem of resettling Syrian refugees by increasing the amount of the displaced persons it admits yearly. In 2015, the state of Massachusetts welcomed 1,911 refugees, only 88 of which were Syrian (Appendix E). In the

midst of a tremendous refugee crisis, Syrian refugees desperately need to resettle somewhere that can provide safety and opportunity. The CCSR urges Massachusetts to resettle a minimum of 240 Syrian refugees per year. Therefore, Massachusetts can provide safety to refugees and decrease the burden and resource depletion of Middle Eastern and European countries.

Security Screenings

Throughout the entire Massachusetts resettlement process, a priority of The Concerned Citizens for Syrian Refugees is to protect the safety, security, and health of United States citizens. For this reason, extensive security and health screenings will take place after a Syrian refugee is considered for the Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program. State officials from the United States Refugee Resettlement Program will be able to vet the refugees by personally interacting with each refugee, their families, and surroundings.¹⁰² Criteria for refugees to be considered for resettlement include: those in physical danger, survivors of violence and torture, widowed women, orphans, and unaccompanied minors.¹⁰³ Once the USRRP officials are certain that a person needs resettlement as a life saving measure, an extensive dossier will be constructed after extensive interviews with the refugee, his or her family members, and friends.¹⁰⁴ After the dossier is approved by the USRRP, the refugee will be selected for consideration and undergo selective interviews and vetting to put together a larger case-dossier. This larger case will be submitted to the Department of State and the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants. Three face-to-face interviews between the refugee and the Department of State will take place at different times to compare information, and make sure that the vetting process remains unbiased.¹⁰⁵ The Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation will also review the case to issue security clearances.¹⁰⁶

Identity and document verification will take place throughout all stages of processing with provision from law enforcement and intelligence agencies as necessary, *before* the refugees can enter the United States of America. Biographical and biometric information -- including fingerprints and digital photos -- will be collected abroad by visa officers.¹⁰⁷ Immigration, law enforcement, and security databases will be cross-referenced throughout the entire screening process.¹⁰⁸ Refugees must pass all security checks and medical screenings before a permanent resident visa is issued. Prior to departing to the United States, the Department of Homeland Security will confirm the identity of each individual refugee. Upon arrival in the United States, all refugees will be processed by the Department of Homeland Security to reconfirm that everything is in order and perform the final verification of identity.¹⁰⁹

Health Screenings

“A full immigration medical exam will be conducted, including screening for communicable diseases as part of the immigration process *before* arrival in the United States. Refugees will be screened for signs of illness once they arrive in the United States, and treatment will be available if needed.”¹¹⁰

Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program

The Concerned Citizens for Syrian Refugees calls for the creation of an Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program (ESRP) within the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants. We are aware that the ORI is funded by federal grants and trust funds (Appendix F). We are petitioning for an additional federal grant of \$16 million per year to cover transportation, healthcare, education, housing, and general assistance for Syrian refugees (Appendix G). This amount will be added to the budgetary federal grant spending of the ORI and will be reserved to only cover costs for the ESRP. Refugees in the program will receive interim cash, on a need

basis, and be sponsored for five years. Refugee families will receive a \$1,000 stipend to help them while they find a job. Refugees will be required to pay back fees associated with the resettlement process, as well as transportation once they have a secure job. Federal law states that after five years, a refugee can apply for citizenship to the United States.¹¹¹ It will be at this time that Syrian refugees can decide to remain in the United States and become a citizen, depart back to Syria, or seek asylum in another country. The Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program will be providing its services to Syrian refugees for 20 years, resettling a total of 4,800 Syrians in the state of Massachusetts.

Refugee Services

The Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program will offer help to newly arriving refugees to achieve self-sufficiency in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts ORI will work with its already-existing refugee resettlement providers throughout the state to serve as centers for Syrian refugees. These centers for aid in resettlement are located in the counties of Suffolk, Worcester, Hampden, Middlesex, as well as Merrimack Valley and the North Shore.¹¹² The 240 Syrian refugees arriving in Massachusetts per year will be resettled throughout these six areas. Some counties have access to more resources and services available to refugees.¹¹³ The ESRP will collaborate with and fund these refugee centers to help the less established centers. Each center will have an equal number of high quality programs to aid resettlement.

The ESRP will provide the following community based services for Syrian refugees to assimilate into society (Appendix H):

- Citizenship Education for New Americans (CNAP)
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Social Adjustment Counseling

- Refugee Employment Services
- Youth Adjustment Services
- Translation and Interpreting
- Mental Health Program
- Micro-Enterprise Achievement Program

The Office for Refugees and Immigrants, as a state agency, will ease the process of resettlement and efficiently keep track of all refugees in Massachusetts. The Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program will oversee all community refugee centers and determine which location will best fulfill their needs. These services will help refugees integrate into the community and facilitate their relocation into Massachusetts.

Logistical Considerations

The History of Massachusetts and Refugees

The United States is currently allowing small numbers of Syrian refugees into Texas, Minnesota, Alabama, and Virginia because of cheap, available space.¹¹⁴ Jennifer Sato believes it is not sufficient to allocate refugees into these kind of spaces.¹¹⁵ As stated in Ethical Considerations, it ultimately “puts them into situations with not enough to rely on, which continues to perpetuate poverty and anger.”¹¹⁶ In the midst of the largest refugee crisis of our generation, Massachusetts is an exceptional state to provide assistance for Syrian refugees. It harbors first-rate research and medical institutions that can support agencies such as the Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI).¹¹⁷

The Massachusetts Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) was created in 1985, and is completely responsible for all refugee affairs in the state.¹¹⁸ The state legislature instituted the Office for Refugees and Immigrants in 1992.¹¹⁹ The ORI oversees programs designed to serve the diverse needs of the “newcomer populations.” It is funded through the ORR, which is a support network for any refugees that enters Massachusetts.¹²⁰ The ORI programs available provide helpful direct services to incoming Syrians through a network of strong relationships with resettlement agencies, ethnic groups, and faith communities.

Over the past ten years, Massachusetts has resettled refugees with the help of private organizations like the Jewish Family Services (JFS) in Springfield, and grassroots organizations like Worcester’s Refugee & Immigration Assistance Center (RIAC).¹²¹ These organizations work to help refugees -from countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, and Iraq- enter the United States, as well as provide safety from war, destitution, or persecution.¹²² They offer services that aid with employment, housing, healthcare, and community counseling.¹²³ These organizations

efforts have proven extremely successful for a small number of refugees each year. These type of programs demonstrate that it is necessary, beneficial, and *possible* for refugees to properly assimilate into the United States' culture and workforce. However, JFS and RIAC have limitations on the number of refugees they are able to assist. In addition to those limitations, organizations like the JFS oftentimes place pressure on refugees to convert to their religion. While their work is commendable, Syrians converting to access those amenities contradicts constitutional rights.

The Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program would ensure that refugees do not have to convert to obtain safe refuge. Sato states that in Massachusetts “We have the brainpower, the infrastructure, and the culture needed to provide a holistic approach.”¹²⁴ Thus, by implementing the Emergency Syrian Refugee Program into the Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI), refugees will be provided with substantial resources and a tolerant environment.

Expansion of the CCSR Proposal

The Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program will be used to aid both current and future refugee crises. The ORI's mission is to “promote the full participation of refugees and immigrants as self-sufficient individuals and families in the economic, social, and civic life of Massachusetts.”¹²⁵ The 2016 fiscal year funding for the ORI of Massachusetts is \$20 million. The funding is currently used for medical assistance, school achievement, and social service programs (Appendix F).¹²⁶ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the ORI are fully capable of providing immediate access to resources for Syrian refugees, so that they receive the treatment and due process they deserve.

In order to meet the Obama Administration's national goal of accepting 10,000 Syrian refugees, the U.S. must expand its available resources and increase the refugee influx into states

like Massachusetts. The CCSR is proposing to open up these counties and regions to Syrian refugees: Suffolk, Worcester, Middlesex, Merrimack Valley, Hampden, and North Shore County.¹²⁷ These counties already have established ORI sites in place, that will be expanded to include the Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program.¹²⁸ The refugee centers will include eight assimilation programs: Citizenship Education for New Americans, English as a Second Language, Social Adjustment Counseling, Refugee Employment Services, Youth Adjustment Services, Translation and Interpreting, Mental Health, and Micro-Enterprise Achievement.¹²⁹ All of these assimilation programs are absolutely essential to the ESRP and will help refugees smoothly integrate into the Massachusetts community.

Approximately \$64,000 will cover one refugee for five years for the following assistance programs: Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Public/Subsidized Housing, Women Infants and Children (WIC), Medicaid, public education, and school lunches.¹³⁰ In addition to the assistance programs, the CCSR determined that families will also receive a stipend based on their household number. A preliminary annual budget of \$16 million would cover approximately 240 people for their first 5 years in one of the refugee centers (Appendix G).¹³¹ It is the CCSR's belief that after all the tools and resources provided, the refugees will be economically self-sufficient after five years and will no longer need economic assistance from the ESRP.

The Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program plans on providing each of the aforementioned assimilation and assistance programs to every refugee center. These programs will have a specialized focus on mental health. Through her refugee experience working with refugees who have suffered and fought for their lives, Sato states that historical conflicts like

power struggles, war, and poverty create a sense of anger and need for revenge among those caught in the middle.¹³² If left alone or mishandled, these senses are passed down through generations and leads to anger and violence. Mental health care is a necessity for refugees. Severe trauma and mental suffering is extremely common in Syrian refugees due to the tremendous toll the war takes on their lives.¹³³ The ESRP's Mental Health program, sponsored by Medicaid, will assist Syrians to cope and overcome psychological damage. Medicaid is the single largest provider for mental health services in the United States and is increasingly playing a larger role in society.¹³⁴ Through an increase in federal funding for the ORI, refugees will have access to Medicaid's programs in order to support their successful adjustment into Massachusetts.

Family and Community Partnership Coordinator, at Pacific Clinics Early Head Start, Danielle Raghieb, has first-hand experience working with Syrian refugees and families in need. Raghieb stressed the need for implementing programs that “focuses on the *whole child* which includes the family and overall wellbeing.”¹³⁵ Raghieb emphasized the necessity of mental health programs that can support the Syrian refugees when they enter Massachusetts. She discloses how families coming from Syria face many struggles assimilating to a new culture and society, “In addition to facing the pressures of assimilating and seeking for belonging, they have to carry a heavy burden of trauma and war.”¹³⁶ We must provide these Syrian refugees support, and address their traumas “so that they can function in society and have successful outcomes.”¹³⁷

The BCRHHR is working alongside government officials to increase funding to allow for a greater number of refugees into Massachusetts. The BCRHHR recently submitted two petitions signed by 23 congressmen and 19 senators, including Senator Edward J. Markey, Elizabeth Warren and Presidential Candidate Bernie Sanders, to the House of Representatives and the

United States Senate (Appendix J).¹³⁸ The proposal requested an increase in the annual budget from \$10.7 million to \$23 million in aid for Syrian refugees.¹³⁹ Using the House of Representatives and the Senate as a platform to initiate this appeal, will not only help Syrian refugees in Massachusetts, but it will shed light on the urgency of the Syrian Crisis and their plights. This document containing extensive support from senators and congressmen, shows how imperative it is for the government to fund the Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program in Massachusetts.

The Necessity of Integration

Proper integration of Syrian refugees is vital to their assimilation in Massachusetts. The program at BCRHHR portrays a holistic approach of integrating refugees from around the world into American society and their new local communities. Upon arrival in Massachusetts, refugees are introduced to the book *Asylum Seeker's Guide to Health, Legal Services, and Life in Boston*, which provides a comprehensive overview on how they can access all of Boston's resources, such as transportation, healthcare and social services.^{140*} With a understanding of American culture, refugees have the opportunity to comfortably settle in Massachusetts.

The director of BCRHHR, Dr. Lin Piwowarczyk, is an advocate for Syrian refugee resettlement in the United States. Piwowarczyk states that "Our willingness as a nation to take in people from other countries makes us a beacon of hope around the world... we must also remember that it is their contribution after they have arrived that has made our country great."¹⁴¹ The United States' history of providing immigrants with opportunities has proven to be economically, socially, and politically beneficial. Massachusetts has the resources to help resettle Syrian refugees, and we must accept that responsibility.

**Asylum Seeker's Guide to Health, Legal Services, and Life in Boston* has been included with the The Concerned Citizens for Syrian Refugees proposal.

Dear Governor Baker,

The Concerned Citizens for Syrian Refugees firmly believes that Massachusetts should provide Syrian refugees safe haven. The state of Massachusetts is fully capable of providing Syrian refugees with life-enriching resources. Here, the refugees can receive proper healthcare, work placements, and an overall higher standard of living. The six counties chosen for resettlement already have centers established under the Office for Refugees and Immigrants, which makes them suitable candidates for the Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program. In addition to the ESRP, the supplemental ORI programs within the centers will ensure that the refugees have all the resources and tools they need to achieve self-sufficiency. The CCSR is asking for an additional \$16 million to make the Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program a reality and work with 4,800 refugees to rebuild their lives in Massachusetts.

The Syrian Civil War is devastating the lives of most Syrian civilians, and their only escape is to neighboring countries. These neighboring countries can only support a finite number of refugees, and if the number exceeds capacity and resources, the countries will eventually collapse. Globalization has created a sense of dependency between trading countries, the United States being one of them. If a country such as Germany collapses from an overwhelming arrival of Syrian refugees, it would take a toll on our own economy. It is mutually beneficial for Massachusetts and the United States to receive additional Syrian refugees. As a global member, the United States has an obligation to these countries exhausting their own resources to aid refugees. Refusing to accept law-complying Syrian refugees breaches the constitutional rights America created in order to ensure equality for all. Rejecting Syrian refugees, due to their ethnicity, directly contradicts what our Bill of Rights and Constitution stand for. It is unlawful (and impossible) for states to prohibit Syrian refugees based on their ethnicity.

Lastly, the violation of human rights in Syria is simply too great an injustice to ignore. There are real life accounts circulating the media, showing just how grotesque the civil war actually is: beheadings in the streets, children murdered in front of their weeping parents, families torn apart, the list goes on. The United States signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and as a signee we committed ourselves to advocating for the human rights on behalf of those who cannot do so for themselves. In this case, those people are Syrian refugees, who only want to escape their destructive circumstances, protect their families, and live peacefully.

By implementing the Emergency Syrian Resettlement Program and increasing the admittance percentage of refugees, Massachusetts would fulfill its duty in this global crisis. Yes, it will require a substantial amount of federal funding, but if the state can allocate \$31.5 million for snow and ice removal costs, Massachusetts can expend \$16 million to aid these refugees who are looking to us to survive.

Sincerely,
The Concerned Citizens for Syrian Refugees
(Appendix L)



Endnotes

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