



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 20-0721, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

SUPPORTING REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN COOK COUNTY

WHEREAS, Cook County is a home rule unit of local government pursuant to Article VII, Section 6(a) of the 1970 Illinois Constitution; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to its home rule power, Cook County may exercise any power and perform any function relating to its government and affairs including the power to regulate for the protection of the public health, safety, morals, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, Cook County is dedicated to providing all of its residents with fair and equal access to the services, opportunities, and protection county government has been established to administer; and

WHEREAS, one in five Cook County residents is foreign born; and

WHEREAS, Cook County has been a national leader in recognizing immigrants as integral members of our community and our economy, and in respecting their rights; and

WHEREAS, the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance prohibits discrimination on the basis of immigration status in the provision or distribution of any County facilities, services, or programs; and

WHEREAS, in 2007, the Cook County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution declaring Cook County a fair and equal county for immigrants; and

WHEREAS, a refugee is a person outside the country of his or her nationality, who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on his or her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion; and

WHEREAS, resettlement is a humanitarian protection tool developed by the United States and other countries as a last resort for refugees who cannot return to their home country and cannot rebuild their lives in the country to which they first fled; and

WHEREAS, the legal basis for humanitarian admissions of refugees and asylum seekers to the United States began with the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980; and

WHEREAS, historically the U.S. resettled more refugees than any other country, but its resettlement program has not kept up with the global refugee population; and

WHEREAS, in 2017 there were approximately 19.9 million refugees worldwide, and the U.S. resettled fewer refugees than the rest of the world for the first time; and

WHEREAS, the President of the United States reduced the refugee admission cap from 85,000 in 2016 to 30,000 in 2019, and to 18,000 for 2020, the lowest admissions number in the refugee program's history and

WHEREAS, the United States has strict refugee vetting, involving extensive in person interviews, multiple background checks, biometric screenings, medical checks, the process takes an average of nearly two years; and

WHEREAS, upon admission, refugees receive employment authorization and a pathway to citizenship; and

WHEREAS, according to the Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois has resettled more than 123,644 refugees from more than 60 countries since 1975; and

WHEREAS, refugee resettlement is funded through the United States Department of State and the United States Department of Health and Human Services, which partner with state and local resettlement agencies to support refugee integration and every day, community members in our area are volunteering with resettlement agencies to help refugees integrate and thrive; and

WHEREAS, refugees often help revitalize neighborhoods and communities and contribute to our local economy and culture.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Cook County supports the existence of a robust refugee resettlement program in the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Cook County continues to welcome refugees and encourages other localities to do the same; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall serve as consent to the resettlement of refugees in Cook County under the Department of State's Reception and Placement Program in accordance with Executive Order 13888; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in so doing, Cook County does not concede that it is lawful to condition placement of refugees on compliance with Executive Order 13888, nor does Cook County waive any privileges or arguments it may have with respect to the ability of the federal government to condition the receipt of federal funding or benefits upon compliance with the President's Executive Orders; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that suitable copies of this resolution be delivered by the Cook County Clerk to the President of the United States, United States Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, and each member of the Illinois Congressional Delegation.