

April 19, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write you as mayors and executives of jurisdictions across our country, united by the belief that the diversity of our communities and our great nation is a source of strength, vitality, and economic power. We have previously spoken out against your inhumane policy to separate children and families, and your misguided attempts to use local law enforcement as federal immigration enforcement officials. Today, we are writing in the wake of your proposal to send immigrants and refugees to welcoming jurisdictions such as ours.

Your statements show a misplaced attempt to retaliate against your perceived political enemies, and that you view immigrants and refugees as mere political pawns. We are proud to lead jurisdictions that welcome immigrants and refugees, and we will continue to do so. We are equipped to support people seeking refuge, and are willing to act urgently in our communities to prevent the further detention of individuals seeking asylum, or the further separation of families. While your initial proposal to bus refugees across the country is likely unconstitutional, nevertheless, to fulfill our responsibility as a nation that protects the human rights of everyone, we are ready to work with the administration to welcome refugees and asylum seekers into our cities and counties, and to ensure they have access to available resources and services.

Mr. President, we are not afraid of immigrants.

We represent some of the hundreds of welcoming jurisdictions in our country, ranging from tiny rural counties to large cities to eight states. As welcoming cities, we know that today's immigrants are tomorrow's United States citizens, and we believe they should have the opportunity to contribute to the economic, cultural and civic life of our nation.

For decades, our country has had a broken immigration system that has punished hard-working men and women who want to contribute to our national life, and eroded the promise that there can be opportunity for those who work hard and abide by our laws. As mayors and executives of diverse jurisdictions, we are well positioned to help shape a solution to this broken system to the benefit of all our communities, and we urge you to take three key steps to address our broken immigration system.

First, you should address the humanitarian crisis at the border with increased resources to process asylum claims, including more immigration judges to adjudicate cases and address the current backlog. It is clear that many of the people seeking refuge and asylum have guaranteed Constitutional right to due process, and our country must be able to appropriately ensure that we are treating asylum seekers and their families. You must also reduce the growing backlog of naturalization applications at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) impacting legal permanent residents in cities across our country. The enormous backlog of citizenship applications prevents hundreds of thousands of immigrants across our country from becoming civically engaged citizens and voters.

Second, you should abandon your ill-advised and unlawful effort to transform our local law enforcement agencies into federal immigration officials. We know that this effort jeopardizes the safety of our communities by eroding the trust between communities and the police, which discourages victims from reporting crime due to fear of retaliation and deportation, and by diverting much-needed local resources away from searches for violent criminals. The role of our local law enforcement agencies is to protect the health and safety of the communities we serve. For that reason, our local law enforcement officials should not do the job of federal immigration enforcement, and any suggestion to the contrary puts the safety of our communities in jeopardy.

Third, we believe you should work with Congress to pass the Dream and Promise Act now. For too long, our neighbors who have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS), or Deferred Enforcement Departure (DED) status have been living with uncertainty. These are workers, entrepreneurs, and innovators who have devoted years of their lives to helping strengthen our cities and country.

Our cities are pursuing the fundamental principles of justice and opportunity that this country was founded on. For years, our cities have taken in those seeking refuge, and we stand ready to continue to welcome our new neighbors, whether or not you're willing to do your job. We will continue fighting to ensure America remains a great land of opportunity.

Sincerely,

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan
Seattle, WA

Mayor Eric Garcetti
Los Angeles, CA

Mayor Rahm Emanuel
Chicago, IL

Mayor Ted Wheeler
Portland, OR

Mayor Miguel Pulido
Santa Ana, CA

Mayor Darrell Steinberg
Sacramento, CA

Mayor Libby Schaaf
Oakland, CA

Mayor Cassie Franklin
Everett, WA

Mayor Sam Liccardo
San Jose, CA

Mayor Michael Tubbs
Stockton, CA

Mayor Martin J. Walsh
Boston, MA

Mayor Michael B. Hancock
Denver, CO

Mayor Jackie Biskupski
Salt Lake City, UT

Mayor Alan Nagy
Newark, CA

Mayor Victoria Woodards
Tacoma, WA

Mayor Pauline Cutter
San Leandro, CA