



**Assistant Minority Whip
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15th Senate District**

**Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
Senate Concurrent Resolution 6 Sponsor Testimony
Commend Refugee Communities
June 2, 2021**

Chairman Roegner, Vice Chairman McColley, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on Senate Concurrent Resolution 6, a resolution to commend refugee communities in Ohio. This resolution would require the Clerk of the Senate to transmit duly authenticated copies of this resolution to the Office of Refugee Services in the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, in addition to media outlets in Ohio.

In 2019, there were 79.5 million displaced people in the world. This includes 26 million refugees who were forced to flee their home countries out of fear that they would be persecuted due to their race, religion, nationality, political beliefs or for being part of a certain social group. The United States has [historically](#) welcomed more refugees than any other country in the world. When U.S. resettlement program began in 1980, there were 207,000 refugees welcomed into the United States. However, by 2018, the United States had fallen behind Canada as the top country for refugee resettlement. In fiscal year 2020, the United States resettled fewer than 12,000 refugees – a significant decrease from the 70,000 to 80,000 refugees who were resettling here annually just a few years earlier.

Resettling in the United States is not easy. The U.S. only permits those who provide evidence of tremendous and most immediate need for protection to resettle here. To become

eligible, refugees must undergo a rigorous selection, security vetting and medical screening process. The total processing time varies and can depend on the applicant's location, in addition to various circumstances and policy changes. It typically averages between 18 to 24 months from the refugee's initial referral from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the refugee's arrival into the United States. The pandemic has unfortunately created disruptions to refugee resettlement, heightening the need for increased humanitarian protections.

Ohio is home to a diverse population of refugees and immigrants. According to the American Immigration Council, These individuals have enhanced Ohio's economic vitality and cultural richness. Research compiled by the National Immigrant Forum found that refugees contribute more than they consume in state-funded services such as schooling and health care.

In fact, research conducted by the Refugee Services Collaborative of Greater Cleveland found that in 2016, Ohio refugees generated an estimated \$82.2 million in spending in the Cleveland area alone. Over 155,000 residents in Columbus were born in another country, including Bhutan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Mexico and more. That means that almost one every ten Columbus residents was born outside of the United States.

Ohio needs to remain a welcoming place that celebrates the cultures, traditions, history and contributions of all who call our state home. All Ohio residents, no matter where they've lived before, should have the chance to achieve their highest potential. This starts by treating all refugees and immigrants with decency and respect. By passing this resolution, the General Assembly will help uplift our vibrant refugee communities across Ohio and celebrate the many ways they've contributed to the culture and history of our state. We thank the Chairwoman for the opportunity to testify for SCR 6. At this time, I would like to allow my joint-sponsor Senator Maharath to provide her testimony.