



December 11, 2019

Dear Mayor Sarno,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Interfaith Council of Greater Springfield, in the spirit of our collaborative relationship with you, and your gracious hospitality to us in recent years when we have come to meet with you at City Hall. Together with you, we are deeply committed to the City of Springfield and all who live and work here . . . and are keenly aware of its many challenges and hopes, its diversity and its promise!

We know we do not always agree on policy and positions on social issues in our community, but we are writing to advocate to you about President Trump's Executive Order regarding refugee resettlement which demands that local leaders declare their consent to continue to receive refugees to their area. If they don't declare consent by December 25, 2019, then all refugee resettlement to their areas will cease. Here's a link to the full language:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-enhancing-state-local-involvement-refugee-resettlement/>

The symbolism of this due date, December 25th, causes us deep sadness, since as you well know it marks the date when our Christian siblings consider the coming of the Holy into the world as an infant born far from home where there was no room for his family to stay. Soon after, the Christian scriptures say, he will be a refugee himself on the run to another country from a dictator of his time trying to stop his coming into the world by killing him.

All of our faith traditions teach us to care for the stranger, and to protect the alien in our midst; to consider all who appeal to us in danger and suffering, and to care for them. We support the work of our local refugee resettlement agencies (e.g., Jewish Family Services, Ascentria, and Catholic Charities), and many of our individual congregations sponsor/support refugee families each year.

We are united in appealing to you and we urge you to send a letter of consent to President Trump by this deadline of December 25, 2019 so that the City of Springfield may continue to receive refugees. Here is why:

- We believe that Springfield is a city which has long benefitted from the arrival of both immigrants and refugees. Refugees contribute to all sectors of Springfield's economy and are an elemental part of Springfield's past, present, and future. We are proud that Springfield has long been a place of safety, security, and welcome for those fleeing persecution and violence.

- We believe it is a moral imperative for us to receive refugees and help them and their families to become safely a part of the diversity and resource that is Greater Springfield, in Massachusetts, in the United States. They give to us with the richness they bring, and so many of us ourselves have come to this country as immigrants and refugees. *They are us*, and we want to continue welcoming them.

Mayor Sarno, we hope you will seriously consider our appeal, and we ask you to let us know how you will respond to this Executive Order. We look forward to receiving your timely response on this time-sensitive matter. Thank you.

Respectfully and prayerfully,

The Interfaith Council of Greater Springfield (ICGS)

InterfaithCouncilGS@gmail.com

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The Interfaith Council of Greater Springfield (ICGS) includes:

The Bahá'í Faith Community of Greater Springfield
Baystate Medical Center Spiritual Services
Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Western Massachusetts Conference
Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts
Jewish Federation of Western Mass (including Sinai Temple and Temple Beth-El)
National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ)
Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield
Springfield City Library
Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield
United Church of Christ, Hampden Association (UCC)
Winding Path Tendai Buddhist Sangha

The Executive Committee of Interfaith Council of Greater Springfield (ICGS) includes:

Rev. Jason Seymour, President of ICGS, Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield

Rev. Marisa Brown Ludwig, Vice President of ICGS, Associate Pastor of First Church of Christ in Longmeadow, UCC

Rev. Lauren Holm, Scribe of ICGS, Pastor of Bethesda Lutheran/East Congregational Churches of Springfield

Sr. Mary Ferguson, Communications Coordinator of ICGS, Sister of St. Joseph of Springfield

Mary E. Johnson, Esq., Treasurer of ICGS, member of the Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts