



Howard County Council

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November 19, 2015

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Maryland State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

We have been monitoring the Syrian refugee crisis and are alarmed by your request to close Maryland to Syrian men, women, and children seeking refuge in our state.

In Howard County, we know that our diversity is our strength. Your request to end the settlement of Syrian refugees under the guise of protecting Marylanders erodes that strength by succumbing to fear—a fear that leads to overt racial profiling, which is an affront to our values. Opening our doors to those who are fleeing violence does not endanger our safety; it shows our compassion and hope.

Welcoming refugees embodies an essential American value, one that is evident across Howard County. These refugees have taken huge risks. It's heartbreaking to think of families who are so desperate to escape unspeakable horrors that they would jeopardize their own lives and those of their children, setting out for the unknown. They do so only because they believe anything is better than the reality they are fleeing.

According to the American Community Survey, approximately 19% of Howard County residents are foreign born, compared to the State average of 14%. Each of these foreign born residents has unique strengths, and we value the contributions they make to our community. We are fortunate to have and proud to support the Foreign-born Information and Referral Network (FIRN), an organization that empowers foreign-born individuals through programs and services and helps them access community resources and opportunities.

It is only right that we embrace our role as a nation of immigrants and continue to welcome all people, families, and children seeking refuge and protection within our borders. We appreciate you taking the time to understand our concerns on the Syrian refugee matter and urge you to reconsider your desire to turn many helpless families away from Maryland and Howard County.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mary Kay Sigaty in blue ink.

Mary Kay Sigaty, Chairperson

Handwritten signature of Jon Weinstein in blue ink.

Jon Weinstein, Vice Chairperson

Handwritten signature of Calvin Ball in blue ink.

Calvin Ball, Council Member

Handwritten signature of Jennifer Terrasa in blue ink.

Jennifer Terrasa, Council Member