“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me”-Matthew 25:35

Rooted in the gospel mandate to welcome the stranger and over twenty five years of refugee resettlement experience, the Episcopal Church applauds the reintroduction of the Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act in the 113th Congress.

Episcopal Migration Ministries has worked in public-private partnership with the U.S. Government to resettle thousands of refugees since the inception of the program in 1980. In the decades since this partnership began, however, we have welcomed an ever diversifying refugee population, including refugees from more than 69 nationalities and an increasing number of refugees with serious medical conditions, refugees who are victims of torture and severe forms of violence, and more single female heads of household. The resettlement program and our dedicated local partners have continued to raise community support and funds for this life-saving program but larger structural updates and increased public funding are needed to continue the success of this partnership. The Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act would address many of the statutory obstacles currently faced by arriving refugees and aid community integration efforts by providing pre-arrival English classes, admitting refugees as legal permanent residents, and augmenting refugee self-sufficiency through extended case management services, recertification opportunities for highly skilled refugees, and increasing assistance for housing and transportation. This bill would also extend services for elderly and disabled refugees and children who are victims of serious crimes.

The Episcopal Church strongly supports the reintroduction of the Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act and thanks Representative Ellison for his continued commitment to providing a high quality of welcome and support for refugees and their new communities.

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