



**For Immediate Release**

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**Kentwood City Commission Adopts Resolution  
in Response to Refugee Executive Order**  
*Commissioners Express Unanimous Support for Refugee Resettlement in the City*

**Kentwood, Michigan, Dec. 18, 2019** – In response to an executive order on Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement, the Kentwood City Commission adopted a resolution in support of the continued resettlement of refugees within City limits.

City Commission unanimously approved the resolution, which affirms resources and capacities are available within the City of Kentwood to devote to sustainable resettlement, which maximizes the likelihood refugees placed in the area will become self-sufficient and free from long-term dependence on public assistance. Kentwood is one of the first communities in West Michigan to publicly affirm its support of Executive Order 13888.

“Kentwood has long been able to welcome refugees facing persecution thanks to numerous corporations, faith-based organizations, schools and families with the resources available to support the arrival and integration of refugee families,” said Kentwood Mayor Stephen Kepley. “As the current home of resettled refugees from more than 90 countries, Kentwood City Commission is committed to ensuring refugees not only feel welcome to come to our City, but to truly feel a sense of belonging within our community.”

“Kentwood’s quality of life has been enriched by the friendships and contributions of our neighbors from all over the world. We look forward to embracing those who seek to find refuge in our City for many years to come.”

In a heartfelt Commission meeting, numerous community members, many refugees themselves, shared comments in support of the resolution. These included representatives from Kent County Board of Commissioners, At-Tawheed Islamic Center, the Vietnamese-American Community of Grand Rapids, Bethany Christian Services, Samaritas and Gateways for Growth.

“The approval of this resolution demonstrates the City’s character and commitment to all New Americans and says loud and clear what type of community Kentwood leaders want to create for all people who want to call this place home,” said Joel Lautenbach, executive director of Development at Samaritas and leadership team member of Greater Grand Rapids/Kent County Gateways for Growth Welcome Plan. “We want new residents from all over the world, including refugees, to be able to find a place to live here – to raise their families, to contribute economically and be successful, contributing members of our community.”

Project Coordinator Elvira Kovachevich of the Greater Grand Rapids/Kent County Gateways for Growth, whose objective is to develop and implement a welcome plan to address different sectors of

obstacles for immigrants and refugees in Kent County, also spoke to the importance of the resolution.

“Seeing the City of Kentwood unanimously approve a resolution to welcome refugees to our community is more than a statement; it is a commitment to welcome everyone with open arms and promote belonging, no matter where you come from,” Kovachevich said. “As a child of refugees who works to welcome other New Americans to our community, the City of Kentwood’s affirmation of the value of refugees is inspiring; the City is truly serving as an example to others.”

Issued on Sept. 26, Executive Order 13888 requires official consent from state and local governments within 90 days in order for the federal government to resettle refugees in a given area, impacting all refugees coming through the U.S. Department of State.

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