

## 2021 SESSION

ENROLLED

### HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 320

*Commending refugee communities in Virginia.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 8, 2021

WHEREAS, around the world, 79.5 million displaced people have been forced from their homes, more than any time in recorded history, including 29.5 million refugees; and

WHEREAS, refugees are people who have fled their country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group; and

WHEREAS, resettlement provides safe haven in a third country when refugees cannot return home and cannot rebuild their lives in the country where they first fled due to lack of access to safety, shelter, health care, education, or protection; and

WHEREAS, resettlement to the United States is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection and takes place only after eligible refugees undergo a rigorous selection, security vetting, and medical screening process; and

WHEREAS, the Trump administration dismantled the refugee resettlement program in the United States, reducing the number of admitted refugees by more than 80 percent, thereby abdicating United States leadership in this area, prolonging family separation, and undermining the nation's foreign policy, humanitarian, and global security objectives; and

WHEREAS, refugees contribute to their new homes by starting businesses, paying taxes, sharing their cultural traditions, and becoming involved in community life; reports have found that refugees contribute more than they consume in state-funded services such as schooling and health care; and

WHEREAS, Virginia is home to a diverse population of refugees and immigrants who have enhanced the economic vitality and cultural richness of the Commonwealth by integrating into their communities and contributing more than \$2.5 billion in spending power as of 2016; and

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, 8,700 refugees have served as frontline workers in Virginia's health care industry as health aids, nurses, physicians, and surgeons; and

WHEREAS, organizations responsible for resettling refugees in Virginia, as well as numerous other community organizations and religious institutions, have declared their support for resettling refugees in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Virginia has been an example of a hospitable and welcoming place to all newcomers, where the contributions of all are celebrated and valued, and residents of the Commonwealth aspire to live up to the highest ideals of acceptance and equality by treating newcomers with decency and respect, building a vibrant community for all; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the benefits refugees provide to the Commonwealth, the United States Refugee Admissions Program and a robust asylum system are critical tools for global leadership; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That refugee communities in Virginia hereby be commended for their many contributions to the beauty and richness of Virginia's diversity and for their work to make the Commonwealth a place where all are welcome, accepted, and appreciated; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Virginia Department of Social Services' Office of New Americans, on behalf of refugee communities in Virginia, as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the importance of these communities to the Commonwealth.

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