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News Release

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JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER PITTSBURGH'S COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL TAKES SERIOUS ISSUE WITH EXECUTIVE ORDER ON REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

The Community Relations Council (CRC) of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh takes serious issue with Friday's Presidential Executive Order, which imposes a four-month suspension on the United States refugee program and bars all immigration from seven Muslim countries – Libya, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen – for 90 days. The current executive order is counter to a stated policy priority of Jewish Federations of North America, which calls for "safeguarding the U.S. refugee program." We support the statements from Jewish Federations and Jewish Community Relations Councils throughout the country, as well as from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, the Conservative Movement, and the Orthodox Union and Rabbinical Council of America, which raise concerns about the executive order.

"The core Jewish value of welcoming the stranger is not only found in our texts, but also in the work of our Jewish agencies both locally and nationally," said Cindy Goodman-Leib, Chair of CRC. "It is critical that we do not turn our backs on millions and millions of people in their greatest hour of need."

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) handled 159 requests by Jews seeking asylum in the United States in 2016, according to a Jan. 30, 2017, report by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA). More than 90 of those requests came from Iran and Yemen, two of the seven countries from which the executive order bans all forms of immigration.

Additionally, Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh (JF&CS), a constituent agency of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh that plays a significant role in resettling refugees in Southwestern Pennsylvania, is directly harmed by the executive order.

"We recognize the weighty responsibility of protecting Americans from the increasing threat of terrorists and other extremists, whether foreign or domestic," said Goodman-Leib. "But by moving too quickly and without engaging many important stakeholders both within the government and civic society, the administration has fallen short of its obligation. Rather than improving safety and security, the executive order has raised anxiety and sown fear and confusion while abridging the civil rights of legal American residents."

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CRC calls upon the administration to reconsider its executive order, and to collaborate with a wide range of diverse partners in order to balance the American and Jewish value of welcoming the stranger with appropriate security protocols.

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