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March 21, 2016

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor Haley,

I was *appalled* to read in *The Greenville News* this morning “*SC, NY considering refugee registries.*” Senate Bill 997 Refugees and Voluntary Resettlement Organizations includes not only a discriminatory registry, but also targets the two Christian organizations that help settle people fleeing violence in other countries. **This is not a way in which our state should lead the way and I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 997.** This bill sounds like hateful Donald Trump rhetoric - words and actions that are taking our country down a dangerous and very un-American path.

Our nation was built by people who left their country of origin because they were seeking a better life. With the exception of the indigenous native people of the US, *everyone else has come here from another country.* We pride ourselves on being a melting pot of peoples of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. That is one of the hallmarks that makes this country great.

We are fortunate in the United States not to face the unfettered violence that the people of countries like Syria, Iran and Sudan face on a daily basis. The people who want to seek refuge in the US would not leave their homes if it were possible to safely stay there. Men, women and children live in terror – both in fear of torture and death as well as unimaginable sexual abuse.

I am a committed Christian and I welcome people of all heritages and religions to seek safe haven in the US and specifically in South Carolina. The sacred scriptures that guide my life speak of the call to hospitality and to taking care of the poor and oppressed – over and over and over. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament reflect the call to love your neighbor – from wherever they originate. As you know, Jesus was a refugee as Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt to escape violence and death (<http://refugeecrisis.worldrelief.org/jesus-the-refugee/>). This Christian narrative is why World Relief helps resettle refugees in our state.

The major terror attack suffered in South Carolina in recent history was not perpetuated by a refugee from another country, but one of our own – Dylan Roof. Why are we so afraid of refugees? If you review the website of Lutheran Services of the Carolinas, the other wonderful Christian organization that assists people seeking a new life in South Carolina (<http://www.lscarolinas.net/services-for-refugees/refugee-resettlement/>), you will see that these people are thoroughly vetted by both the Department of Homeland Security AND Immigration Services.

I am counting on you, as my Governor, to oppose Senate Bill 997.

Best regards,

