

December 14, 2011

Fellow Refugee Community Supporters:

We would like to express our gratitude to Governor Deal and Commissioner Reese for signing several delayed human services contracts through the Georgia State Department of Human Services releasing \$4.1 million in federal funds earmarked to the Refugee Program.

Federal funds provided through these contracts are vital to refugee resettlement and service agencies for the delivery of crucial services to the refugee community in Atlanta. Services such as English language learning, job training and afterschool/summer academic programs funded through this federal support help refugees:

- learn English more quickly,
- find jobs more easily and
- integrate their children successfully into the American school system.

Funding for rapid self-sufficiency programs ensures that refugee families become fully productive, tax-paying residents of the state in a far shorter period of time. Even after enduring so much, refugees assimilate quickly, become self-sufficient and are grateful contributors to their new community. As a unified refugee resettlement group, we are proud that 85% of refugees resettled in Georgia are self-sufficient within the first 180 days, largely because of this funding for services.

We appreciate the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families/Office of Refugee Resettlement for their support in resolving the contract delays. We also offer our gratitude to the federal and state representatives who agreed to attend this forum today. We are thankful for the opportunity not only to share concerns, but also to share some wonderful stories about how Georgia has welcomed new international friends and how they have in turn enriched our community.

Finally, we are incredibly grateful to the elected officials, faith leaders, business owners and community members in metro Atlanta for their outpouring of support and advocacy during this crisis. Thank you for lending your voice to this important humanitarian cause.

With heartfelt gratitude,

