

**Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.**  
901 South Highland Street, Arlington, VA 22204

**Testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations**

**Full Committee Hearing: Review of the President's Emergency Supplemental Request for Unaccompanied Children and Related Matters**

Thursday, July 10, 2014, 2:30 p.m.

The Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc. (ECDC) is grateful for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the Committee regarding President Obama's emergency supplemental request to address the influx of unaccompanied children.

ECDC was established in 1983 to respond to the needs of a growing Ethiopian community locally and quickly became a multi-service provider with national and international reach. We focus on African refugees and immigrants, although we have been resettling refugees from all over the world for 23 years. We are one of the nine national refugee resettlement agencies that partners with the U.S. Department of State, and the only one that works with ethnic community-based organizations as our resettlement partners.

ECDC urges Congress to pass the President's emergency supplemental appropriations request and in particular, to approve the appropriation of \$1.8 billion to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for additional capacity to care for unaccompanied children while maintaining services for refugees. With these funds, HHS will have the resources to be able to care for the children currently projected to come into the custody of the Department of Homeland Security, and still provide promised services to the other vulnerable populations that fall under ORR's mandate including refugees, asylees, Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa recipients who assisted U.S. efforts, Cuban and Haitian entrants, victims of human trafficking and survivors of torture.

ECDC is very concerned over the current funding crisis at ORR that will cause extremely detrimental consequences for refugees resettled in the United States and the communities that embrace them, and may even lead to the demise of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program as we know it. To accommodate the steep increase in the number of unaccompanied children fleeing violence in Central America and entering the United States during FY 2014, ORR has reprogrammed \$94 million from its FY 2014 budget for refugee services to meet the needs of these arriving children. While it is critical that these vulnerable children receive protection and care in the United States, we are equally concerned that another vulnerable population, resettled refugees, will be harmed if ORR does not receive additional funding in FY 2014.

It is crucial that the United States do everything it can to care for these vulnerable children on the border, but one vulnerable population cannot be served at the expense of another. Cuts to refugee services hurt refugees already here and the communities where they live, impeding the refugees' ability to obtain education, employment, and stability. Integration programs that have been promised such as employment services so refugees can attain self-sufficiency, grants that assist local schools with refugee children, preventive health programs which ensure the health and safety of refugees as well as their neighbors, and English classes that help resettled refugees start their new lives as Americans, will all be drastically cut. Additionally, we have recently been informed that some states, such as Florida, have decided that because they will not receive this funding to support refugees, they will not approve future refugee arrivals at the same level. Thus, ORR's funding shortfall and reprogramming of funds will have an impact on the entire

U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program. This means that refugees who have been languishing in camps for decades, having already passed their medical and security checks and patiently waiting to be resettled, will have to wait even longer or may not be able to come to the United States at all.

The United States has a long history of offering assistance to those who seek safety within its borders, and refugee resettlement has been an important foreign policy tool since the end of World War II. Having welcomed over 3.1 million refugees to start new lives in our country since 1975, the U.S. must continue its global leadership in the area of refugee resettlement. Rather than reprogramming funds from one vulnerable refugee group to inadequately help another, ORR needs increased funding to meet the needs of all refugees who fall under its mandate and to prevent the collapse of the entire U.S. refugee resettlement program.

To this end, ECDC makes the following recommendations:

1. Provide additional funding to the Office of Refugee Resettlement as contained in the \$1.8 billion request for HHS in the President's requested emergency supplemental appropriation.
2. Include language in the appropriations measure that ensures that the accounts within ORR/HHS for refugee services and for the unaccompanied children remain separate.

In conclusion, we thank the Senate Appropriations Committee for this opportunity to present our concerns and recommendations, and hope that they are seriously considered at this critical time.