MCIRR
Michigan Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

c/o Secretary
MCIRR Steering Committee
3030 S. 9th St. Suite 1B
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

December 1, 2016

Michigan House of Representatives
Committee on Local Government
124 North Capitol, 3-South
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514
mterrie@house.mi.gov

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Re: House Combined Resolution 28

Dear Members of the Committee on Local Government:

The Michigan Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights is group of more than 40 nonprofit member organizations serving communities statewide. We oppose House Combined Resolution 28 because it is based on incorrect assumptions and assertions about the refugee resettlement process and would create unfounded fear about refugees.

HCR 28 claims that there is some inadequacy in the community consultation process as it is carried out by the Office of Refugee Resettlement and presumably the resettlement agencies who work locally. Many of our member organizations are very involved in these regional quarterly community consultation meetings. These consultations have been convened on a regular basis and in an orderly fashion for years with the full knowledge and active involvement of the Michigan Department of Refugee Resettlement State Refugee Coordinator, Mr. Al Horn, who has served our state in this role for decades. We would urge state lawmakers who have any questions about this process to consult with Mr. Horn or with the Michigan Office of New Americans (MONA) within Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA). We would further urge lawmakers who are interested in refugee integration to visit with a refugee resettlement agency or actually attend a quarterly community consultation meeting. We would be glad to introduce any legislator interested in engaging with refugees and organizations providing services related to refugee resettlement and integration to contacts in their local area. You will find not only fundamental compliance with the Refugee Act of 1980 in these meetings, but a true flourishing of civic and community spirit in the interest of serving vulnerable and valuable people.

We are additionally concerned about HCR 28's implication that there is something inadequate about the refugee security screening process. In fact, it is by far the most rigorous process faced by any group of people seeking admission to the United States. It has been exceedingly well documented and exceptionally effective. We have attached an informational graphic published by the federal government to this letter to provide more information. The U.S. has admitted more than three million refugees since 1975 and no more than twenty have been found to have any involvement whatsoever with terrorism. A September 2016 report from the Cato Institute, *Terrorism and Immigration, A Risk Analysis,* closely examines the issue and in addition to finding especially low risk of terrorism by refugees, it finds low risk among all groups, concluding generally that, "the United States government should continue to devote resources to screening immigrants and foreigners for terrorism or other threats, but large policy changes like an immigration or tourist moratorium would impose far greater costs than benefits."[1] As the only state that lost population in the last census, Michigan should take particular note.

Setting aside the hard facts, our members know refugees personally and care deeply for them. Many of us, staff and leaders of our member organizations, are refugees ourselves. We know that refugees contribute socially, culturally, and economically to our local communities and the entire State of Michigan. We reject this attempt to stoke fear of our refugee neighbors who we know well and value greatly. We invite you to deepen your relationship with our member organizations to learn more about how you as a leader can promote the kind of refugee integration and success that benefits the entire community. Please feel free to contact us at the address above.

Sincerely,

s/Rachel Settlage
East Region Co-Chair
MCIRR

s/Kate Flores
West Region Co-Chair
MCIRR

[1] Nowrasteh, Alex. Terrorism and Immigration: A Risk Analysis; Cato Institute Policy Analysis No. 798. September 13, 2016. Available at: https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/terrorism-immigration-risk-analysis visited December 1, 2016.