



PRESS RELEASE

NEW TRAVEL BAN BLOCKS REFUGEE FAMILIES, HALTS WELCOMING EFFORTS IN NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

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FAYETTEVILLE, AR -- Over the last four months, our Northwest Arkansas community should have been preparing apartments, classrooms, and job interviews for at least 11 newcomer refugee families. Teams of volunteer community members stood ready to furnish homes and apartments. Teachers were ready to welcome new students. Employers anticipated interviewing qualified candidates. Most importantly, families who arrived in previous years, after a long and difficult journey, were waiting at the airport, hearts full of hope, ready to embrace loved ones they hadn't seen in years. Instead, our storage room sits empty. The tickets were canceled.

Today, this becomes even more difficult with the issuance of a [travel ban](#) on 12 countries. The Trump administration issued a similar ban in 2017 which caused fear, anxiety, and extended family separation. Refugees are people fleeing persecution. People fleeing terrorist regimes.

Canopy was awaiting twenty-six families from seven countries, where travel to the United States is now banned. All of these individuals went through a rigorous, time-tested vetting process. Eight of the families even had plane tickets in hand. These include the sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, of people in our community, bringing their talents, compassion, faith, perseverance, and a dream to live in safety.

Canopy NWA was formed by a group of people responding to the Syrian refugee crisis. While the first Syrian refugee case was assigned to Canopy in 2016, due to the travel ban in 2017, which included Syria, that family was forced to wait. Their security and medical clearances expired and they had to repeat them. The first Syrian family did not arrive in Northwest Arkansas until 2021. Since then, they have become beloved neighbors, colleagues and friends. Some of the Syrian refugee families assigned to come to Canopy in 2016 still have not arrived. Syria is not on the list of countries for the 2025 travel ban but we know families, including women and children, whose only option for safety is third country resettlement to the United States. They are in harm's way.

We urge our leaders to pursue immigration practices that both protect and uphold our values. Country-wide bans do neither. What keeps our country strong is a community that welcomes. A system that vets thoroughly, yes - but also one that follows through.

The United States needs immigration practices that keep us safe and make us stronger. Full country bans are not the way to do this.

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