RESOLUTION #

**Resolution Supporting Compliance with the Refugee Act of 1980, Requesting and Recommending an Immediate Pause on Refugee Resettlement Under the Refugee Act of 1980 (8 U.S.C. 1522) Within the State of Wisconsin**

Resolution offered by the Health Resources Committee

Resolved by the Board of Supervisors of Sauk County, Wisconsin:

**BACKGROUND:** The Refugee Act of 1980 states in 8 U.S.C. 1522(1)(B)(iii) that “local voluntary agency activities should be conducted in close cooperation and advance consultation with State and local governments.” The Refugee Act of 1980 states in 8 U.S.C. 1522(2)(A) that “The Director and the Federal agency administering subsection (b)(1), shall consult regularly (not less often than quarterly) with State and local governments and private nonprofit voluntary agencies concerning the sponsorship process and the intended distribution of refugees among the States and localities before their placement in those States and localities”. The Refugee Act of 1980 states in 8 U.SC. 1522(2)(B) states that “The Director shall develop and implement, in consultation with representatives of voluntary agencies and State and local governments, policies and strategies for the placement and resettlement of refugees within the United States”. The Refugee Act of 1980 states in 8 U.S.C. 1522(2)(C)(ii) that the Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement will “provide for a mechanism whereby representatives of local affiliates of voluntary agencies regularly (not less often than quarterly) meet with representatives of State and local governments to plan and coordinate in advance of their arrival the appropriate placement of refugees among the various State and localities.”

Coordination is critical to the success of any such mission to relocate refugees to help determine if the area of relocation is capable of supporting such relocation and necessary services, whether performed by offices of the federal government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs). 2023 Senate Bill 916 was introduced to provide a procedure for providing notice and compliance with the Refugee Act of 1980 but was vetoed by the governor.

Sauk County is located within 100 miles of Madison, WI, which has an NGO located there, and may settle refugees/asylees within 100 miles of their office location(s). The state of Wisconsin, through the Wisconsin Department of Children & Families, is projecting that 1775 refugees from resettlement agencies (NGOs and/or VOLAGs) and 3846 refugees from the Department of State by the end of fiscal year 2024. An unknown number of refugees are to be resettled by the Madison based agencies. The resettlement of refugees requires extremely significant expenditures of financial resources, by both the United States Government, and the state of Wisconsin, in order to facilitate their relocation to the state of Wisconsin, including costs for housing, healthcare, food assistance, education, social services, translation services, language instruction, modification, additions, or new construction to primary and secondary educational institutions, increased costs to school districts with the addition of the children of asylees and refugees.

Sauk County Board of Supervisors have the authority to act in this matter pursuant to Wisconsin Statute §59.03, such that: (a) the Wisconsin State Legislature has not spoken on the matter, and (b) the effects of such legislation would not uniformly affect every county. As such, the county may act on resettlement issues as they affect Sauk County. The Sauk County Board of Supervisors have a duty to act in the best interest of the County populace and to be fiscally responsible to that population. Resettling of refugees/asylees has significant long-term financial resource demands associated with it. The United States Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, published a report in February of 2024 written by Robin Ghertner, Suzanne Macartney, and Meredith Dost, proving that states and local government lose billions of dollars funding these refugee resettlementsas shown in Table 2 of their brief. Sauk County has already increased tax levies to cover necessary expenses and to fund state mandated programs. The Baraboo School District is further seeking to raise tens of millions of dollars for ongoing operations, which do not include the potential consequences of adding numerous children to school district, or the financial burden that would be incurred from such additional demands placed on the school system.

The Sauk County Board of Supervisors has not been contacted by the relevant non-governmental resettlement agencies, and no agency has provided an actual cost (expenditure) for each refugee/asylee and a source of long-term funding to cover such costs.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors that an immediate pause on the placement of any refugees within Sauk County; and

 **FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED,** that the County of Sauk requests that the Wisconsin Counties Association supports the reintroduction and ultimate passage of 2023 Senate Bill 916; and

 **FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors that, prior to the resettlement of any refugee/asylees within Sauk County, that all federal, state, local, NGOs or VOLAGs involved with the resettlement of refugees/asylees, shall engage in consultation with the Sauk County Board of Supervisors that such governmental agencies or NGOs intend to relocate refugees/asylees within Sauk County, and adequate time is available for the County and local governments to evaluate and ascertain the financial and other impacts on the county and local communities therein, and that all sources of short and long-term funding for refugees/asylees be made known to the County and local government, and the approximate cost per refugee/asylee, including the cost of such family members that will accompany the refugee/asylee, be made known so the local governments, including the cost of education per pupil for primary and secondary education, can appropriately evaluated to determine the feasibility of establishing such refugees/asylees within the County; and

**FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors, that notice of this resolution be sent to the Wisconsin Counties Association, the relevant non-governmental organizations, and to the Bureau of Refugee Programs, U.S. State Department, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Approved for presentation to the County Board by the Health Resources Committee, this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , 2024.

Consent Agenda Item: [ ] YES [ ] NO

Fiscal Impact: [ ] None [ ] Budgeted Expenditure [ ] Not Budgeted

Vote Required: Majority = \_\_\_\_\_ 2/3 Majority = \_\_\_\_\_ 3/4 Majority = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The County Board has the legal authority to adopt: Yes \_\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as reviewed by the Corporation Counsel, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

Offered and passage moved by:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ □ Aye □ Nay □ Abstain □ Absent

Supervisor Patricia Rego

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ □ Aye □ Nay □ Abstain □ Absent

Supervisor David Clemens

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 Supervisor Joan Fordham

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ □ Aye □ Nay □ Abstain □ Absent

 Supervisor Rebecca Klitzke

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ □ Aye □ Nay □ Abstain □ Absent

 Supervisor Thomas Dorner

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Aye  Nay  Abstain  Absent

 Citizen Member Kiana Li Beaudin

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Aye  Nay  Abstain  Absent

 Citizen Member Eleanor Vita

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 Vacant

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 Vacant

Fiscal Note: Resettling of refugees/asylees has long-term financial resource demands associated with it for Sauk County. The County already maximizes tax levy to support necessary expenses and fund state mandated programs.

MIS Note: No impact.