

The IRC and Refugee Advocacy Lab present

STATES LAY THE FOUNDATION

A New Blueprint for Refugee & Immigrant Integration

Virtual Summit

Friday, June 10, 2022

12 PM ET / 9 AM PT



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STATES LAY THE FOUNDATION

A New Blueprint for Refugee & Immigrant Integration



Summary

At a critical moment of rebuilding for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), the IRC and Refugee Advocacy Lab are bringing together refugee and immigrant voices, state legislators, and technical experts to celebrate their efforts to create more welcoming communities for refugees. This virtual summit will include a series of panel discussions and individual conversations between policymakers who are advancing legislation related to education, workforce development, integration support, and more. Attendees will also have direct access to correlating policy resources and the technical support they need to replicate such measures within their own states.

Language Accessibility

As part of our commitment to equity and inclusivity, we are expanding language access to our legislative summit series by offering interpretation in Spanish and Arabic. In tandem with the practical provision of interpretation during this event, we continue to advocate for language access and justice across our platforms and portfolios. To learn more about language access, and our efforts to promote language justice, check out the [Language Access Policy: Precedent and Possibilities](#) brief from the Refugee Advocacy Lab.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded land of Indigenous peoples across the United States. Information on land acknowledgment is available from the Native Governance Center ([HERE](#)). A Native Land resource mapping Indigenous lands is available [HERE](#). It is crucial to note land acknowledgment is a starting point in the recognition and support of indigenous communities.

EVENT AGENDA

12pm ET / 9am PT: Opening Remarks

Madlin Sadler, Senior Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, International Rescue Committee

12:10pm ET / 9:20am PT: Keynote Speaker

Viet Thanh Nguyen, Author, IRC Board Member, and Ambassador

12:20pm ET / 9:20am PT: Panel 1, Advancing Long-Term Outcomes in Education

Moderator: Darlene Lynch, Center for Victims of Torture & Georgia State Lead, Refugee Advocacy Lab

Panelist: Senator Ghazala Hashmi, Virginia

Panelist: Representative Dan Johnson, Utah

1:00pm ET / 10am PT: Legislative Conversation, International Medical Graduates

Senator Fabian Doñate, Nevada

Representative Naquetta Ricks, Colorado

1:10pm ET / 10:10am PT: Panel 2, Integration & Welcoming Policy

Moderator: Victoria Francis, International Rescue Committee & Colorado State Lead, Refugee Advocacy Lab

Panelist: Senator Andrew Gounardes, New York

Panelist: Representative Iman Jodeh, Colorado

Panelist: Representative Steve Kaiser, Arizona

Panelist: Representative My-Linh Thai, Washington

1:50pm ET / 10:50am PT: How States and Local Elected Officials Can Support Resettlement

Kate Brick, Director of the Refugee Advocacy Lab

1:55pm ET / 10:55am PT: Closing Remarks

Genevieve Kessler, Director of State Policy at the International Rescue Committee & State Strategy Lead, Refugee Advocacy Lab

ABOUT THE IRC & REFUGEE ADVOCACY LAB



International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future. Join the thousands of IRC supporters who have called their representatives, written letters, shared our campaigns, or otherwise mobilized to advocate for change in their communities and worldwide: <https://www.rescue.org/take-action>



Refugee Advocacy Lab

The Refugee Advocacy Lab is an initiative co-led by Refugees International, the International Rescue Committee, Refugee Congress, and the International Refugee Assistance Project. The Lab works to advance the movement for U.S. leadership on refugee protection and inclusion. It does so by developing strategic communications resources; championing inclusive state policies; and building the field through new partnerships and refugee leadership development.

PRESENTER & SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Speakers & Moderators



Madlin Sadler, Opening Speaker

Madlin Sadler is the Chief Operating Officer of the International Rescue Committee. She drives an agenda of innovation and is focused on ensuring that each department is results and data-driven, strategically aligned, and designs and delivers right fit services to the IRC's country programs and Resettlement and Integration offices. Before joining the IRC, Madlin previously worked as Special Adviser in the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department of the Environment. Prior roles also include Director of Social Impact and External Affairs for Mishcon de Reya, Director of Governmental Affairs at Ford Motor Company, and Policy Advisor in the European Parliament.



Viet Thanh Nguyen, Keynote Speaker

IRC Board Member and Ambassador Viet Thanh Nguyen is an acclaimed bestseller and Pulitzer Prize winning author. He is the Aerol Arnold Chair of English and a Professor of English, American Studies, and Ethnicity, and Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California. He arrived to the United States from Vietnam as a refugee with his family in 1975.



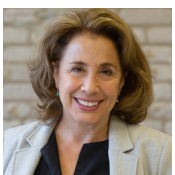
Kate Brick, Event Host

Kate Brick is the Director of the Refugee Advocacy Lab and Senior Advisor to Refugee International's Strategic Outreach team. Kate brings 15 years of experience working on immigration and refugee policy and advocacy internationally and in the United States, most recently as Deputy Executive Director at the Mayors Migration Council (MMC). Prior to the MMC, Kate was the Director of State & Local Initiatives at the New American Economy (now merged with the American Immigration Council). Kate holds an MA in International Affairs from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and a BA in Latin American Studies from George Washington University.



Genevieve Kessler, Closing Speaker

Genevieve Kessler is the State Strategy Lead for the Lab, and the Director for State Advocacy for the International Rescue Committee since early 2017. For nearly a decade prior to joining the IRC, Genevieve served as Congressional staff for two House Members based out of the Hudson Valley in New York. Genevieve has an MPA from John Jay College of Criminal Justice CUNY and a BA in Political Science from Ramapo College of New Jersey.



Darlene Lynch, Moderator Panel 1

Darlene Lynch is the Georgia State Policy Lead for the Refugee Advocacy Lab. She is a long-time human rights advocate and experienced lawyer and also serves as the Head of External Relations for The Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) in Georgia. In her role at CVT, she advocates for refugees, asylum seekers, and human rights, including an end to torture worldwide. Darlene is the founder and chair of the Business & Immigration for Georgia or "BIG" Partnership, which is dedicated to expanding education and employment opportunities for Georgia refugees and immigrants, and helps to lead advocacy on a broad range of issues for Georgia's Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies. Prior to joining CVT, Darlene spent years engaged in the fight against human trafficking, in the State of Georgia as well as at the United Nations in Geneva. She holds a JD with honors from The University of Chicago Law School and a BA from Georgetown University.



Victoria Francis, Moderator Panel 2

Victoria Francis is State Advocacy Officer for the International Rescue Committee and the Refugee Advocacy Lab. She covers Colorado and Kansas. Victoria has worked on state-level initiatives, including in-state tuition for refugees and Special Immigrant Visa recipients, the codification of state participation in the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, the creation of an Office of New Americans, and licensing of international medical graduates.

PRESENTER & SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Legislative Panelists



Senator Ghazala Hashmi, Virginia, Panel 1

Senator Ghazala Hashmi, PhD, serves in the Virginia General Assembly, representing the 10th Senatorial District which includes parts of Richmond City, Chesterfield County, and all of Powhatan County. She sits on the following Senate committees: Education and Health; Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources; General Laws and Technology; and Local Government. Senator Hashmi also chairs the Senate Subcommittee on Public Education. As an experienced educator and advocate who spent nearly 30 years working within Virginia's college and university system, she identifies education, equity, the environment, and healthcare access as top legislative priorities. Senator Hashmi was elected to office in November 2019. Prior to her election, she served as the Founding Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning (CETL) at Reynolds Community College in Richmond, Virginia. She is the first Muslim American to serve in the Virginia Senate.



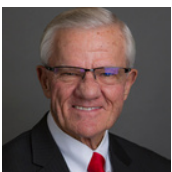
Senator Andrew Gounardes, New York, Panel 2

State Senator Andrew Gounardes represents New York's 22nd State Senate District, which includes the neighborhoods of Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Bensonhurst, Bath Beach, Gravesend, Gerritsen Beach, Manhattan Beach, and Marine Park. He was elected to the State Senate in November 2018. Born and raised in Bay Ridge, Senator Gounardes' passion for public service began as an aide to former City Councilmember Vincent Gentile, and as a Legislative Aide for Investigations in the United States Senate. Prior to being elected, he served as Counsel to Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams and a trustee of the New York City Employees' Retirement System, one of the largest municipal pension funds in the country. As an attorney and community advocate, Senator Gounardes' experience taught him that no one can accomplish anything good by themselves: It takes a community willing to unite, organize, and stand together to help our neighborhoods thrive.



Senator Fabian Donate, Nevada, Legislative Conversation

Appointed in February 2021, state Senator Fabian Donate represents Nevada's 10th Senate District in Clark County, Nevada. Senate District 10 is located in the heart of Clark County and oversees the majority of the Las Vegas Strip, McCarran Intl. Airport, UNLV, and central East Las Vegas. Donate is a professional with degrees in public health and health administration. As the son of Mexican immigrants, Donate has devoted most of his career to raising awareness for causes that will make his community a better place. Donate has served as a consultant for major health systems and smaller organizations, primarily seeking to integrate innovation and digital technology into evidence-based strategies to advance the field of public health. Donate is a trained major-gift fundraiser, specializing in public health research and development. Given his practical experiences in the non-profit sector, Donate keenly understands the policy disparities observed in the health care community and the urgent need to invest in our national public health infrastructure. Recently, Donate is the first in his family to complete college and achieve a graduate degree. Donate is a graduate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas with a BS in Public Health and received his Master of Health Administration (MHA) from the University of Maryland, College Park. Additionally, Fabian is an alumnus of the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity and a lifetime member of the Delta Omega Public Health Honorary Society. In his spare time, Donate enjoys outdoor recreational activities, landscape photography, and making music playlists.

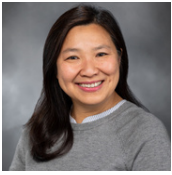


Representative Dan Johnson, Utah, Panel 1

Dr. Daniel N. Johnson serves as a member of the Utah House of Representatives where he proudly represents the citizens of Logan in House District 4. He assumed office on January 1, 2019. Previously, Dan served as an educator in Utah for 50 years with 42 years as an administrator. He served as the Assistant Superintendent for the Tooele County School District, and retired in 2018 as the Director of Edith Bowen Laboratory School in the College of Education and Human Services on the campus of Utah State University. Dan has been the recipient of several awards including Utah Principal of the Year, Runner-up for National Principal of the Year, Governor's "Point of Light" for his volunteer service, the Utah Council of the International Reading Association "Reading Principal of the Year", and the Technology Leader of the Year in Utah. His contributions to education were recognized when he received the prestigious "Jon M. Huntsman Award for Excellence in Education."

PRESENTER & SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Legislative Panelists



Representative My-Linh Thai, Washington, Panel 2

My-Linh Thai serves in the Washington State House of Representatives representing the 41st district in King County. At the age of 15, My-Linh Thai immigrated to Washington state as a Vietnamese refugee with her family. She is proud to be the first refugee elected to serve in the Washington State House of Representatives. Rep. Thai is a passionate education advocate who is committed to ensuring equity and access for all. Prior to serving in her current role, she has served as a PTSA parent volunteer and received the Washington State PTA Outstanding Advocate Award in 2013. She was elected as the School Board Director for the Bellevue School District, and later elected to serve as Vice President of the Washington State School Board Directors Association (WSSDA) in 2017. Rep. Thai is the Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus. She also serves on the Civil Rights Judiciary Committee, Finance Committee, and Public Safety Committee.



Representative Naquetta Ricks, Colorado, Legislative Conversation

Representative Naquetta Ricks is the first African immigrant to be elected to the Colorado Legislature, and the first Liberian American to be elected to any state legislature. When she was only 13, she was forced to flee civil war in Liberia, and her family settled in Aurora, Colorado. Representative Ricks received her undergraduate degree in accounting at MSU, and her MBA from the University of Colorado Denver. She then went on to operate a successful small mortgage brokerage business and found the African Chamber of Commerce, Colorado USA. As a leading Black woman in business and politics, she works tirelessly to improve her community by helping build economic knowledge, and by championing the rights of immigrants and refugees. In her first session in the Colorado legislature, she led the fight on groundbreaking legislation including the creation of the Immigration Legal Defense Fund and the Diverse K-12 Workforce Report.



Representative Iman Jodeh, Colorado, Panel 2

Iman Jodeh is the Representative for House District 41 in Aurora, Colorado. As a first generation American, born to Palestinian immigrants and refugees, she has called Colorado, specifically HD41, home her entire life. As the first Muslim and Arab woman elected to the Colorado State Legislature, she is passionate about social justice work and advocates for criminal justice reform, fighting the rising cost of and increasing access to healthcare, increasing access to jobs and education, ensuring equal rights for all, and combating our climate crisis. Iman is also the Founder and Executive Director of the locally based non-profit, Meet the Middle East (MTME), which fosters relationships between the US and the Middle East through education and immersion travel. As the first female Spokesperson for the Colorado Muslim Society, Iman also plays a major role in representing the Muslim community on a variety of social justice areas statewide.



Representative Steve Kaiser, Arizona, Panel 2

Steve Kaiser serves as a State Representative in Arizona's 15th district. A graduate of Arizona State University, Steve served in the US Army as a communications officer and later as a Civil Affairs Captain, deploying to Afghanistan in 2008. As a civilian, he has a strong record of work in the retail, nonprofit, and government affairs sectors. He is also a small business owner of a residential and commercial junk removal company. Steve still lives in the same community he grew up in, attending schools in the Paradise Valley School District. Steve resides in North Phoenix, AZ with his wife Amanda who is a registered nurse and their three sons.

PANEL SUMMARIES & RESOURCES

Panel 1: Advancing Long-Term Outcomes in Education

Summary

For many families arriving to the U.S. as refugees or immigrants, their children's access to education is one of their most important priorities. A refugee child's experience in school is often their first meaningful interaction with the broader community. This panel will discuss policies that address unintentionally discriminatory practices for refugee families in educational systems, create more clear and flexible enrollment processes, and ensure children have the support they need to be successful in school.

Resources

[Opinion: Utah lawmakers can help refugees navigate public schools](#)

in this opinion piece, Representative Dan Johnson highlights how refugee students are often arbitrarily barred from enrollment, inaccurately placed in the wrong grade, or prematurely aged out of the school system.

[HB230: Refugee and Immigrant Student Policies Amendments](#)

Representative Johnson's legislation works to support refugee students throughout the school enrollment process.

[Language Access in Education: School Enrollment](#)

The Refugee Advocacy Lab's policy recommendations for improving school enrollment processes for refugee children promote clarity and flexibility in the enrollment process.

[SB 156 Public Schools; English language learners](#)

Senator Ghazala Hashmi's legislation improves the ratio of full-time teachers for English language learner students in K-12 public schools.

Legislative Conversation: International Medical Graduates

Summary

Across the US, communities face ongoing healthcare worker shortages, while at the same time, the skills of immigrant and refugee healthcare professionals who received their training outside of the US are vastly underutilized. Representative Naquetta Ricks (CO) and Senator Fabian Donate (NV) will discuss how they are working to make a change and create opportunities for International Medical Graduates to demonstrate that they have the skills and training needed to help address physician shortages and return to practice in the US.

Resources

[HB22-1050:](#)

Representative Naquetta Ricks' 2022 legislation works to address physician shortages in Colorado by integrating International Medical Graduates (IMGs) into the state's healthcare workforce. It also advances opportunities for qualified IMGs to gain U.S. clinical experience, demonstrate that their skills meet U.S. standards, and return to their chosen careers as physicians.

[Licensing Options for International Medical Graduates:](#)

This Refugee Advocacy Lab brief identifies common obstacles faced by international medical graduates (IMGs) working to recertify in their chosen professions, and provides a series of policy recommendations that address these barriers while maintaining a commitment to patient care and safety.

PANEL SUMMARIES & RESOURCES

Panel 2: Integration & Welcoming Policies

Summary

Welcoming and integrating newcomers takes many forms. This bipartisan panel will focus on the variety of ways states are advancing policies that honor the contributions immigrants and refugees make to local communities, protect and support resettlement, and promote state investment in the successful integration of newcomers.

Resources

[SB7430: Establishes that it is an unlawful discriminatory practice to deny a refugee resettlement in certain instances.](#)

Senator Andrew Gounardes' legislation codifies the state of New York's participation in the US Refugee Admissions Program and makes it an unlawful and discriminatory practice to deny a refugee resettlement based on any part of their identity (age, race, national origin, religion, ethnicity, etc.).

[HR 2003: Honoring Military Interpreters](#)

Representative Steve Kaiser introduced this resolution honoring the contributions of Afghan interpreters to US military efforts and urging the state of Arizona to continue to support this community. Representative Kaiser later [read this resolution](#) before the Arizona House of Representatives to welcome newly-arrived Afghan families to the community.

[HB21-1150: Create the Colorado Office of New Americans](#)

Representative Iman Jodeh's legislation establishes a statewide Office of New Americans to serve as the point of contact for immigrant-serving government agencies, private organizations, and the public. Its primary goal is to facilitate the successful economic, social, linguistic, and cultural integration of newcomer communities in Colorado.

[WA Budget Allocation for Afghan Evacuees & Other Refugees \(page 273\)](#)

Representative My-Linh Thai led a budget amendment allocating \$28.5 million in general state funds towards services for Afghan evacuees and other refugee arrivals. This invests in accessing childhood education services, education and employment support, housing access and security, and more.

THANK YOU

3 Post-Summit Actions You Can Take:

Following today's summit, we encourage you to consider ways that you can help make your states and communities more welcoming for refugees. Here are a few actions you can take today!

1. Encourage your state and local elected leaders to [sign this letter in support](#) of refugee resettlement. Every year, the President decides how many refugees to admit to the U.S. in the coming year. Encourage your state and local leaders to sign this letter, showing President Biden that our communities are ready to welcome refugees in 2023!
2. View the [legislative samples](#) shared at the end of the summit to learn more about these policies. Learn which policies may be most impactful for your state and share these resources with impacted communities.
3. Share this event with your social networks. It's a great opportunity to raise awareness about creative and impactful policy lessons across states!

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