

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
03 August 2017

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World Relief Calls on Congress to Support Broad Immigration Reform, Believes RAISE Act Diminishes U.S.

BALTIMORE, MD - World Relief calls on Congress to support immigration reform but raises concerns about the RAISE Act believing it will create significant hardships for immigrant families while limiting the U.S. response to the global refugee crisis.

"We must consider not just the economic capital but social capital that immigrants bring when they come to the United States," said Tim Breene, CEO of World Relief. "The notion of severely limiting legal immigration goes against the historic American values of freedom and opportunity. We're pro-security, pro-economy, pro-family. This bill, however, significantly hampers the reunification of families in the United States which are the building blocks of our society. We must recognize that families are critical to the flourishing of any society and make every effort to reunite families in order for immigrants to find full stability and flourishing once in the United States. Any efforts to undermine immigrant family unity ultimately undermines their ability to thrive," continued Breene.

Known as the RAISE Act (Reforming American Immigration for a Stronger Economy), the bill would limit green cards for family reunification to about 50% of those allowed today and eliminate the Diversity Visa Lottery. The bill purports to return immigration to historic levels; however, given the increase in the population of the United States, the bill actually reduces immigration to 0.14%, which is far below our historic average level immigration at 0.45%, as averaged over 150 years, according to the Cato Institute. In addition, according to the American Action Forum, while the bill purports to facilitate economic growth, this act will result in a sharp decrease in the labor force most leading economists believe is needed to increase our economic production.

The bill proposes to limit refugee admissions into the United States to 50,000 per year and replaces the current process of Presidential Determination in which the President sets the refugee ceiling after consultations with Congress. "Limiting the refugee admissions ceiling permanently to 50,000 abdicates our responsibility to those fleeing violence and persecution. Setting a statutory limit inhibits the flexibility required to determine the refugee ceiling based on global refugee trends and U.S. foreign policy interests," said Emily Gray, Senior Vice President of U.S. Ministries at World Relief. Nearly 70% of the refugee resettlement work of World Relief is in reuniting families. "The refugee resettlement program is a vital public-private partnership through which World Relief has welcomed over 250,000 refugees since its inception in 1980, in partnership with the local church."

"We hope this bill will initiate conversations in Congress to enact immigration reform that recognizes the many contributions that immigrants have made to our nation and that promotes U.S. leadership in protecting the lives of the most vulnerable," continued Tim Breene. "We support bipartisan efforts to reform the broken immigration system that goes beyond border protection alone and addresses the current problems of our immigration system, by looking at root causes of immigration, developing workable solutions and providing dignified relief to the millions of immigrants who are contributing to our communities."

As an evangelical Christian organization, World Relief has worked with local churches over 30 years to serve and love their immigrant neighbors. Through this work, World Relief has witnessed thousands of evangelical churches who are actively reaching out and welcoming their immigrant neighbors as an expression of their faith. "When a nation of immigrants and refugees forsakes its past, it gives up its future. We cannot lose the heart of compassion that gave so many of our own grandparents hope and refuge. The world needs American leadership; America needs the dignity, beauty and ingenuity of the peoples of the world. This is not a conversation about us versus them," said Scott Arbeiter, President of World Relief.

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World Relief is a global humanitarian relief and development organization that stands with the vulnerable and partners with local churches to end the cycle of suffering, transform lives and build sustainable communities. With over 70 years of experience, World Relief works in 20 countries worldwide through disaster response, health and child development, economic development and peacebuilding and has offices in the United States that specialize in refugee and immigration services.