



**Statement for the Record**  
**Lavinia Limón, President and CEO,**  
**U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)**  
**Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Immigration and the National Interest**  
**Hearing on the Central American Minors Refugee/Parole Program**

**April 23, 2015**

Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Schumer, and Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), a national non-profit organization serving refugees and immigrants for the past 100 years, I submit our statement for the record in support of the in-country processing program for Central American Minors (CAM) and to provide clarification in light of news articles containing misinformation about the program.

In-country processing allows applicants to apply for refugee status in their home country. In-country processing is not new. The U.S. government currently has such a program in Cuba. As precedent, to end the Mariel Boatlift in 1980, a lottery was established which allows 20,000 Cubans to enter the U.S. every year. The hope of “winning” has kept Cubans from hazarding the ocean for the last 34 years. In-country processing was also used in the past for the resettlement of Soviet Jews and Vietnamese.

We urge you to support the CAM in-country processing program. This program provides some children a safe, legal, and orderly alternative to embarking on the dangerous journey to the U.S. and preventing them from becoming victims of human smugglers and trafficking operations. Not only will this program protect children, but it will also take away resources and therefore power from traffickers. Once children are qualified as refugees, it is possible that other countries in North or South America may also be willing to accept children for resettlement.

In 2014 the world witnessed an increased migration of unaccompanied children from Central America. Many of these children came to the U.S. fleeing persecution and seeking safety. The children, and sometimes their families, saw no other choice but to assume the risks of making the dangerous journey to the U.S., because they faced greater risks if they stayed in their country. To date USCRI has made a difference in the lives of over 7,500 unaccompanied immigrant children, by providing them with legal and social services. Based on this and our over 100 years of experience working with displaced individuals, USCRI compiled six solutions grounded in international law and a historical precedent to protect people fleeing persecution. We are happy to see one of our solutions, establishing an in-country processing program, implemented because it will save lives.

On December 1, 2014, the U.S. State Department announced the official launch of an in-country refugee/parole program in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The program allows certain parents who are legally present in the U.S. to apply for refugee status via the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for their children currently living in one of the above-named three countries. This means the children will be brought safely and legally to the U.S. through the U.S.



Refugee Program. This program will help protect children facing persecution and who meet the refugee definition under U.S. law. Children who don't meet the U.S. definition of a refugee, but are still considered to be at risk of harm may be eligible to travel to the U.S safely and legally under humanitarian parole. Consideration for parole will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Department of State-designated refugee resettlement agencies, through their national networks play an important role in this process by helping qualifying parents submit applications. Resettlement agencies do not receive any government funding to administer the CAM program. To apply, qualifying parents must make an appointment with a local refugee resettlement agency. Only designated resettlement agencies can file the Form DS-7699 Affidavit of Relationship.

We welcome any questions or opportunity to meet to discuss the program further. Thank you for your time and consideration.