

23 February 2021

Dear Landlord:

Thank you for considering renting one of your apartments to a refugee family. Allow me to describe the US Government refugee resettlement program, including the overseas security screening process and background check that all refugees pass through before they are invited to come to the United States, and the support that our organization provides to refugees once they have arrived in Connecticut.

Refugees – people forced to flee their home countries due to persecution -- are selected and screened by the US federal government overseas. They are interviewed face-to-face, numerous times over the course of many months, by personnel from the US Department of State and Department of Homeland Security. They are fingerprinted and their identification documents (birth certificates, passports, etc.) are examined by FBI forensics experts. Fingerprints and personal information are reviewed by the CIA and the FBI. Information is shared with the intelligence branches of the US Military. In addition, the information is compared to international terrorist watch lists and criminal databases. The entire process takes at least 18 months, while refugees wait in refugee camps or other areas in the Middle East and Africa. The US government background check / vetting process for refugees is the most rigorous in the world. Only refugee families who have passed through this security vetting process may be invited to come to the US.

After undergoing a health screening, approved refugees are then assigned to one of nine national voluntary agencies that, in turn, place them with one of 200 nonprofit groups spread across the United States.

IRIS, established in 1982 and based in New Haven, is one of the 200 nonprofit groups. Our work with refugees is strictly regulated by the federal government and we are monitored by the State Department on a regular basis. The Interim CT State Refugee Coordinator Carlene Taylor, based in the Connecticut Department of Social Services, oversees our resettlement services. Connecticut Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy are staunch supporters of refugee resettlement, as are all members of the state's Congressional delegation and Governor Ned Lamont.

IRIS's role is to welcome refugees to Connecticut and provide them with basic services that include case management, housing, education, healthcare, and employment. We regularly work with community groups that assist us in providing these services. We have resettled more than 5,000 refugees over our 34 years of service, and we have worked with more than 100 landlords. (I would be happy to provide you with names of satisfied landlords in Greater New Haven.)

Finding a safe and clean apartment, with a responsive landlord, in a friendly neighborhood is a hugely important part of welcoming new Americans. We thank you for playing a role in this great American tradition of welcoming refugees.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions. My cell phone is 860 805 7805.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "CHRIS GEORGE". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris George  
Executive Director