

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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World Relief Responds to Announced Restrictions to Immigration Due to COVID-19

BALTIMORE – In response to President Trump’s announcement via Twitter and subsequent executive order halting immigration in the light of the COVID-19 crisis, World Relief urges the administration to reconsider. These measures to shut down already restricted travel – temporarily halting most categories of immigrant visas for those coming from outside of the U.S., with limited exceptions – are inconsistent with expert health advice, disregard immigrant contributions to frontline efforts and are contrary to the U.S.’s role in demonstrating leadership in managing the disease and opening the country up for work.

“Temporary travel restrictions are appropriate if driven by public health best practices,” commented **World Relief President Scott Arbeiter**. “But as the country slowly emerges from the COVID-19 shutdown, we must not use the pandemic as a pretext to restrict legal immigration that is essential for rebuilding our economy and for reuniting families.”

Every individual granted an immigrant visa is already required to undergo a thorough medical examination to ensure they do not have any contagious disease before being allowed to enter the U.S., so there is no reason to think that the immigrants who will be restricted under this new order would pose a public health threat.

The administration has also cited economic concerns as a rationale for this new order, but the vast majority of economists believe that immigration is actually a source of economic strength. Immigrants do not only “take jobs,” they also add to the economic pie through their consumption and through entrepreneurship, starting new businesses and creating jobs at higher rates than native-born U.S. citizens.

Refugees and individuals who served the U.S. military who qualify for Special Immigrant Visas are specifically exempted from this order, for which World Relief is grateful. However, the U.S. refugee resettlement program remains on hold. World Relief urges the refugee resettlement program to be reopened, allowing refugees to be reunited with their family members already in the U.S.

World Relief CEO Tim Breene said, “We have long affirmed that families are the building blocks of society, and the current crisis has underscored for many Americans the importance of family. Because the primary impact of this executive order is to restrict family-based immigration, it represents a new form of family separation, penalizing families that have already paid visa petition fees and waited for months, years or, in some cases, decades in our family reunification system. This is unacceptable.”

World Relief is supportive of the administration's efforts to manage and prevent the further spread of COVID-19, but urges the government to reconsider measures that contradict both public health advice and the principles on which the U.S. is formed.

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About World Relief

World Relief is a global Christian humanitarian organization that brings sustainable solutions to the world's greatest problems – disasters, extreme poverty, violence, oppression, and mass displacement. For over 75 years, we've partnered with churches and community leaders in the U.S. and abroad to bring hope, healing and transformation to the most vulnerable.

Learn more at worldrelief.org.