

January 30, 2017 Statement from Mark Okazaki, Executive Director, Neighborhood House, regarding President Trump's recent Executive Orders

Neighborhood House was founded in 1906 as a Settlement House to welcome refugees who were fleeing religious persecution. Today, we continue that tradition of welcoming immigrants and refugees who come to America to escape war, poverty and persecution. Last year, Neighborhood House provided services to thousands of immigrant and refugee community members coming to King County from over 90 different countries.

A multiservice organization with over 30 programs, we work to provide wraparound support that helps these new Americans and other low income community members succeed in school, work and life.

As a longtime social service provider in Seattle and King County's largest affordable housing communities, Neighborhood House continuously adapts our services to meet the cultural and language needs of those living in our region. Our staff of 250 speak 35 different languages, with the majority being immigrants and refugees and the children and grandchildren of immigrants and refugees.

The recent Executive Orders regarding immigrants and refugees are mean spirited and fly in the face of decency and humanity let alone constitutional protections granted everyone regardless of their immigration status. We estimate that these orders barring citizens from seven Middle Eastern countries could potentially impact over 1,000 of our clients and approximately 25% of our staff who still have family, friends and loved ones living there.

Children are afraid that someone will come take them away at night. Their parents worry that they will lose their homes, their jobs, their businesses, their families. This is not American.

We are fortunate to live in a city, county and state that are led by courageous individuals. We applaud Seattle Mayor Ed Murray, King County Executive Dow Constantine, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee, State Attorney General Bob Ferguson and so many more of our elected officials who immediately issued statements condemning the President's actions and affirming their support for immigrants and refugees.

Sadly, we expect more attacks on immigrants, refugees, people of color, women, religious minorities, the poor, the environment, our LGBTQT friends and family and other marginalized communities.

Neighborhood House is working diligently to ensure that our clients and staff have access to up-to-date information and that they are able to connect to resources to help them address issues as they arise.

For every attack, someone will stand up. Someone will stand strongly in opposition to hate, to fear, to oppression, to injustice. Neighborhood House will be among them. We will stand up strongly and say "No, not here."

This is not who we are as a community and as a nation. We are better than this.