

# The Minnesota Public Health Association Opposes Deportation of Legal, Permanent Residents of the United States of America

Statement by the MPHA Health Equity Committee, April 8, 2020

The Minnesota Public Health Association (MPHA) opposes the deportation of Hmong and Lao individuals from Laos who are legal, permanent residents in Minnesota. Minnesota is home to 82,000 Hmong residents, the largest concentration in the United States, and 17,800 Lao residents, the fourth largest population in the country. These communities have made a profound impact on Minnesota's economy, culture and leadership. Uprooting this community is unjust, immoral, and a betrayal of our country's patriotic duty to these refugees. MPHA stands in solidarity with these communities.

Lub Koos Haum Minnesota Public Health Association (MPHA) tsis pom zoo muab Hmoob thiab Nplog cov muaj xam xaj, muaj npav ntsuab nyob Minnesota xa rov qab mus Nplog Teb. Minnesota yog lub lav uas muaj Hmoob coob tshaj plaws rau ib lub nroog haum teb chaws me kas. Hauv Minnesota no Hmoob coob txog li 82,000 tus tib neeg thiab Nplog muaj txog li 17,800 tus tib neeg, coob zeeg 4 nyob rau teb chaws me kas. Hmoob thiab Nplog muaj txiaj ntsim pab tsim kho thiab ntxiv kev lag kev luam, txheej txheem kev cai thiab kev coj noj coj ua rau hauv Minnesota. Yog rhuav tshem cov haiv neeg no, nws yuav siv tsis tau, tsis ncaj ncees thiab rov taw tuam ntuj rau kev uas yuav los pab tiv thaiv cov neeg tawg rog khiav teb chaws no. MPHA muaj kev koom siab thiab yuav tuav tes nroog haiv neeg Hmoob thiab Nplog ua ke.

ສະມາຄົມສາທາລະນະສຸກແຫ່ງລັດມິນິໂຊຕາ ຄັດຄ້ານການເນລະເທດຄົນມື້ງ ແລະ ຄົນລາວ ທີ່ມີສິດດ້ານກົດໝາຍ ແລະ ເປັນຜູ້ທີ່ອາໄສແບບຖາວອນ ຢູ່ໃນ ລັດມິນິໂຊຕາ. ລັດມິນິໂຊຕາເປັນບ້ານຂອງຊາວເຜົ່າມື້ງຈຳນວນ 82,000 ຄົນ ຊຶ່ງເປັນບ່ອນທີ່ຊາວເຜົ່າມື້ງໜາແໜ້ນກ່ວາໝູ່ໃນສະຫະລັດອະເມລິກາ ແລະ ຄົນລາວທີ່ພັກອາໄສຢູ່ຈຳນວນ 17,800 ຄົນ, ລັດດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ ເປັນເມືອງທີ່ມີ ພົນລະເມືອງຫຼາຍອັນດັບທີ 4 ຂອງປະເທດ. ຊຸມຊົນດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ ໄດ້ສ້າງຜົນ ປະໂຫຍດຢ່າງຫຼວງຫຼາຍຕໍ່ເສດຖະກິດ, ວັດທະນະທຳ ແລະ ບົດບາດການນຳພາ ຂອງລັດມິນິໂຊຕາ. ການຖອດຖອນຊຸມຊົນດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ ແມ່ນບໍ່ຍຸດຕິທຳ, ຜິດ ສິນທຳ ແລະ ເປັນການທໍລະຍົດຕໍ່ໜ້າທີ່ຮັກຊາດ ຂອງອົບພະຍົບເຫຼົ່ານີ້. ສະມາຄົມສາທາລະນະສຸກແຫ່ງລັດມິນິໂຊຕາ ຍືດໝັ້ນຄວາມສາມັກຄີສະນິດແ ໜັ້ນກັບຊຸມຊົນນີ້.

Seeking asylum is a human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (“Refugee Convention”) and its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (“1967 Protocol”) prohibit the United States from returning refugees to persecution, and the 1980 Refugee Act set up a formal process for applying for asylum in the United States. However, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) created a barrage of new barriers to asylum. These impediments have blocked many refugees from accessing asylum in the United States and inserted additional layers of technicalities, screening, and processing, undermining the effectiveness of the US asylum system.<sup>1</sup>

Minnesota is home to 82,000 Hmong residents, the largest concentration in the United States, and 17,800 Lao residents, the fourth largest population in the country.<sup>2</sup> These are strong and vibrant communities that have made a profound impact on Minnesota's economy, culture and leadership.

In 2018, the Department of Homeland Security announced that the United States would begin imposing visa restrictions on Laos as a means to pressure this Southeast Asian nation into a deportation agreement with the United States.<sup>3</sup> IIRIRA allows for the deportation of legal permanent residents in the United States who have committed a crime at some point in their lives, even though many of them have completed their sentence and gone on to be productive members of society. Individuals who made mistakes, accepted the consequences, and have gone on to be valuable, contributing members of our community are the model of success for our justice system. Yet, under IIRIRA, these individuals are vulnerable to deportation, an act whereby they would be stripped of their homes, communities, and lives as Americans; this is a disproportionate level of punishment.<sup>4</sup>

The individuals facing deportation under IIRIRA are legal permanent residents of the United States. They are Americans who sought refuge here with their families as a result of American geopolitics in Southeast Asia. In the shadows of the Vietnam War, the CIA organized a secret war in neighboring Laos to prevent communism from spreading deeper into Southeast Asia. The Hmong fought for the U.S. — and for themselves — to keep Ho Chi Minh's regime from destroying their way of life.<sup>5</sup> These very groups fought on behalf of the United States during the Secret War. After Laos fell to Communism in 1975, these allies of the United States had to flee in order to escape persecution. Many of these refugees settled in Minnesota.

Minnesota Hmong and Lao people are business owners, combat veterans, elected officials and judges who fought alongside American soldiers, and passionate people who have enriched Minnesota's culture into what it is today. Most of the Southeast Asian Americans with a deportation order have never lived in those countries or no longer have ties there. Uprooting this community is unjust, immoral, and a betrayal of our country's patriotic duty to these refugees.<sup>6</sup>

[The Minnesota Public Health Association](#) joins Minnesota Governor Tim Waltz and the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans in opposing the deportation of legal, permanent residents in Minnesota. We stand in solidarity with these communities who lost their homelands in aiding the United States in Southeast Asia and have become part of the rich tapestry of Minnesota.

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- 1 Center for Immigration Studies. <https://cmsny.org/publications/illegal-immigration-reform-immigrant-responsibility-act-1996-undermined-us-refugee-protection-obligations-wasted-government-resources/>
  - 2 Minnesota Compass. Minnesota's Cultural Communities. <http://www.mncompass.org/demographics/cultural-communities/overview> Accessed 2/21/2020.
  - 3 DHS Announces Implementation of Visa Sanctions, July 10, 2018. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2018/07/10/dhs-announces-implementation-visa-sanctions> Accessed 2/21/2020.
  - 4 Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans Statement regarding the potential deportation of certain Lao and Hmong Americans. <https://www.facebook.com/CAPMnews/photos/pcb.3162930550403609/3162929617070369/?type=3&theater> Accessed 2/21/2020.
  - 5 America's Secret War: Minnesota Remembers Vietnam. Twin Cities PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/show/americas-secret-war-minnesota-remembers-vietnam/> Accessed 2/21/2020.
  - 6 Minnesota Governor Tim Waltz letter, February 18, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/CAPMnews/photos/a.324086734288019/3165264223503575/?type=3&theater> Accessed 2/21/2020.

