July 11, 1975

Dear Governor Ray:

As you know, on May 24, 1975, I signed into law the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 to assist in the resettlement of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees who are seeking new homes in the United States. Since then, I have established an Interagency Task Force on Refugees to coordinate the resettlement program and to assure that it is accomplished as humanely and expeditiously as possible. In addition, I have appoined a Presidential Advisory Committee to assist in this effort.

I am pleased to report that as of June 30th, more than 41,000 of the 130,258 evacuees have joined their families or sponsors in the United States and are beginning to contribute to their new communities. These refugees have been accorded parole status, making them eligible to remain in the United States indefinitely and to accept employment. All refugees, except those few deemed "self-sufficient", will be assigned sponsors to assist in the resettlement process. Sponsors may be individuals, families, service organizations, churches or other groups. Commitment as a sponsor, while not a legal one, involves a clear moral obligation to help the refugee to the best of the sponsor's ability.

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Many individuals and voluntary agencies are participating in the resettlement program by locating sponsors and facilitating the movement of refugees from the four reception centers to their new homes. These voluntary efforts have been exemplary, but we should not expect that they alone will accomplish this great humanitarian task as quickly as we would all wish.

I am encouraged that a number of States and local governments are developing programs to assist in expediting the resettlement of the refugees into their new communities. You have received information from the Advisory Committee about one of these programs which Governor Dan Evans launched in Washington State. This successful effort has led to placement of more than 500 refugees with sponsors throughout the State.

The Interagency Task Force is now prepared to contract with other States which choose to develop their own resettlement programs. Funds are available to support State efforts through reimbursement of $500 for each refugee placed.

In addition, 100 percent federal reimbursement is available to all States for Medicaid, financial assistance, and social services provided to refugees. Administrative costs related to the provision of such services will also be reimbursed. Financial support to help defray emergency costs incurred by school districts, should they enroll large numbers of refugee children, will also be available. These programs are further described in materials being transmitted to your State agencies through existing channels.

I have asked the Federal Regional Councils to assist the Task Force by aiding State and local governments in the development of programs which they wish to undertake. You may expect to hear from a representative of the Federal Regional Council in the near future.

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Whether or not you choose to lead a resettlement effort in your State, your leadership in assuring State agency and private organization support of sponsoring families and individuals will provide invaluable assistance to this effort.

The responses of thousands of individuals and the untiring efforts of voluntary agencies have demonstrated again the generosity of Americans toward others seeking to find homes in our country. I hope you will consider ways in which your State may participate in this effort.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD

The Honorable Robert D. Ray
Governor of Iowa
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

13

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40