

IMMIGRATION, LOCAL, POLITICS

Refugee Dream Center loses funding and staff after Trump immigration orders

After Trump's executive order to stop refugee entry for the next four months, the Providence-based nonprofit says it's already lost federal funding, forcing them to lay off staff members.



by Luis Hernandez and Paul C. Kelly Campos
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Meg Redner and Michael McCabe, working at the front desk of the Refugee Dream Center in South Providence on Jan. 8 2025. / Meg Redner y Micheal McCabe, trabajando en la recepción del Refugee Dream Center en South Providence el 8 de enero de 2025. Credit: Paul C. Kelly Campos/The Public's Radio

Immigrants and local groups that support them are feeling the impact from President Trump's flurry of executive actions this week. The [Refugee Dream Center](#) in Providence says it has already lost federal funding and laid off some of its staff members as a result. The non-profit helps resettle refugees and connect them with services. With the State Department's refugee program now suspended, the group's future looks more uncertain. Morning host Luis Hernandez spoke with the executive director of the Refugee Dream Center, Teddi Jallow.

Interview highlights

On the immediate effect of Trump's immigration-related executive orders

Teddi Jallow: Every refugee resettlement program is shut down. And we also received an email from our affiliates in Washington, D.C., highest, they also sent an email saying that no more refugee is coming until further notice due to the executive orders. So all our arrivals are being canceled.

I just feel sorry for those people that were looking forward to have a second life, to have a place that they can call home, those people that are in these refugee camps for 10 years or for more. We see what happened in Ukraine, what happened in Somalia, in all these countries that are bombarded with war. So all those people are looking to have a second chance, a second place that they call home. So these families are no longer coming. So that means they are back wherever they are again in those camps, in that life, like miserable life. It's just sad. It's just sad at the Refugee Dream Center.

On what will happen to refugees in Rhode Island

Jallow: We have a post-resettlement department that is continuing the continuation of services ... so these services will continue no matter what. We will still exist, and we will still continue to do the work that we were doing before. And it's just a sad situation. Right now, every day now, our office is full of people. We have migrants. We have people that are scared. We have actually a lady who actually said, "Okay, I decided to take my kids out of school." But we are working with that lady to make sure the kids are still going to school, she's not taking them out of school – because she is scared to be deported. She is scared that she will get in trouble with ICE. And all those questions are coming in, even staff are sad and scared. But this, again, this is not new.



On what she learned from Trump's first administration

Jallow: I learned how to be resilient, and how to know, like, where to put my foot and when to talk. And I learned that Rhode Island is a very supportive state. ... I should be scared, but I am not alone. And we will still rise. And we did, those four years. I believe this is going to be another long four years, but we will still rise again, and we will have the support from other people, from people that care about the work that we do, from other people that care about those refugees, those immigrants that depend on the wraparound services that we serve here at the Refugee Dream Center.

On what's different about Trump's second term

Jallow: He has more power this time. He controls everything. When he say he's going to do something, he's going to do it. And the worst part is, we may not be able to do anything about it. I started meeting with people, and some are saying, "oh, what he's saying, it may not be that quick." But it is happening. Are we going to wait until it happened, and we say something, or we do something? But this time is different. He's coming with more power this time.

On support from the Rhode Island community

Jallow: Rhode Island is a very supportive state, and we have good people in this state that are always ready to help in any situation. I receive so many phone calls and emails, "how can I help?" ... Some are donating, some are helping, using their time to volunteer, to help teach somebody English, or to be matched with a family who is new in this state to support them with, you know, knowing the American culture, just knowing even how to use the bus.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the programs and services offered by the Refugee Dream Center. [Click here](#) for a list of local resources for immigrants, including tips on family preparedness, health care, immigrants' rights, and more, from the Immigrant Coalition of Rhode Island.

