

1           A RESOLUTION expressing solidarity with North Korean refugees in their quest  
2 for relief from both hunger and persecution.

3           WHEREAS, under the misnomer of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the  
4 current North Korean government is a continuation of the absolute dynastic dictatorship  
5 started by Kim Il-sung in 1948. Following his death in 1994, Kim Il-sung was succeeded  
6 by his eldest son, Kim Jong-Il. On December 17, 2011, Kim Jong-Il died and his  
7 youngest son, Kim Jong-un, was immediately installed as his successor. The majority of  
8 the North Korean people have experienced unimaginable suffering during the regimes of  
9 all three of these dictators; and

10           WHEREAS, the North Korean government's top priority is the total control of all  
11 aspects of life in North Korea. All information, artistic expression, academic works,  
12 media activities, and travel within its borders are strictly limited, as is freedom of speech;  
13 and

14           WHEREAS, the North Korean government has illegally detained, tortured, and  
15 executed foreign national political prisoners, other outspoken opponents of the regime,  
16 and certain "repatriated" defectors, as well as members of outlawed religions and  
17 organizations; and

18           WHEREAS, despite the North Korean government's denial, currently it is  
19 estimated that over 120,000 political prisoners are imprisoned in North Korea without  
20 due process for political reasons according to the United States based Committee for  
21 Human Rights. A decade ago there were an estimated 250,000 political prisoners being  
22 held in camps under deplorable conditions. The reduction over this time is largely due to  
23 prisoners dying from starvation, neglect, forced labor, disease and executions, according  
24 to the United Nations; and

25           WHEREAS, in the early 1990s during the famine of North Korea, more than 3  
26 million inhabitants of North Korea died of starvation due to the failure of the North  
27 Korean government-operated centralized agricultural and distribution systems. The

1 current hunger crisis may prove to be even worse than famine in the 1990s, due to the  
2 fact that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the North Korean government closed all  
3 borders including in the northeast; and

4 WHEREAS, according to a joint publication of the United Nations, the Food and  
5 Agriculture Organization, the World Food Program, and the World Health Organization,  
6 during the years 2019 to 2021, 10.7 million North Koreans suffered from  
7 malnourishment, which is 41 percent of the North Korean population; and

8 WHEREAS, the North Korean government continues to prevent the monitoring of  
9 the delivery and distribution of food aid provided by the World Food Program, as it has  
10 since 1995; and

11 WHEREAS, the risk of starvation, threat of persecution, and lack of personal  
12 freedoms have caused hundreds of thousands of North Koreans to flee, primarily into  
13 China. Those citizens that attempt to escape North Korea risk being shot to death by  
14 North Korean soldiers in the process. Women are often at risk of being kidnapped and  
15 sold as brides, concubines, or forced into prostitution, and if caught, are forcibly  
16 repatriated to North Korea where they face torture, malnourishment, and forced labor in  
17 prison camps; and

18 WHEREAS, pursuant to the 1951, Refugee Convention and the United Nations  
19 Convention Against Torture which officially classifies North Koreans as "refugees sur  
20 place," every time any country repatriates a North Korean, it is violating this agreement.  
21 Along with China, both Vietnam and Thailand have given in to North Korean demands  
22 and repatriated refugees back to North Korea; and

23 WHEREAS, since the 1990s, the Ministry of Unification of South Korea reports  
24 that 34,021 refugees have resettled in South Korea. However, the number of refugees that  
25 have resettled in South Korea has significantly decreased to 229 in 2020, to 63 in 2021,  
26 and to only 67 in 2022, hitting a record low since 2019 when 1,047 resettled before the  
27 COVID-19 pandemic led to tighter border control; and

1           WHEREAS, the United States Congress passed the North Korean Human Rights  
2 Act of 2004, which intends to protect human rights and freedom in North Korea,  
3 including the promotion of humanitarian or legal assistance to North Korean escapees.  
4 The Act grants North Korean refugees the opportunity to come to the United States to  
5 resettle. The United States began accepting refugees in 2006, and total of only 220  
6 refugees have resettled here since inception; and

7           WHEREAS, with numbers decreasing annually, only two refugees resettled in the  
8 United States during the year 2020. There are several reasons for such a small number,  
9 including that the process is lengthy and resettlement in the United States can take from  
10 18 to 24 months; processing by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services is  
11 slow with a significant backlog; and resettlement in the United States is not favorable due  
12 to the language barrier; and

13           WHEREAS, while the responsibility for domestic refugee resettlement naturally  
14 devolves to South Korea, the United States should play a leadership role in addressing the  
15 plight of these refugees and develop international and domestic solutions for this  
16 humanitarian crisis; and

17           WHEREAS, it is important that we express our support for the development of a  
18 human rights and democracy program that includes meaningful cultural and educational  
19 exchanges with North Korea;

20           NOW, THEREFORE,

21 ***Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the***  
22 ***Commonwealth of Kentucky:***

23           ➔Section 1. The members of the House of Representatives do hereby express our  
24 solidarity with North Korean refugees in their quest for relief from both hunger and  
25 persecution.

26           ➔Section 2. The members of the House of Representatives do hereby urge the  
27 United States government to:

1           (1) Condemn the governments of China, Vietnam, and Thailand for their failure  
2 to uphold their obligations under the 1951 UN convention agreements, and strongly  
3 request change in their actions or face consequences;

4           (2) Pressure the government of China to release thousands of North Korean  
5 refugees currently trapped in China, for resettlement elsewhere; and

6           (3) Take a leadership role in forming an international framework for resettlement  
7 of North Korean refugees both here and abroad, and to ease the bureaucratic red tape  
8 placed by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, thereby expediting and  
9 streamlining the process for North Korean refugees to resettle in United States.

10           ➔Section 3. The Clerk of the House of Representatives is directed to transmit a  
11 copy of this Resolution to Representative Kim Moser, President Joseph Biden, United  
12 States Secretary of State Antony Blinken, United States House Speaker Mike Johnson,  
13 United States Senator Chuck Schumer, the members of the Kentucky congressional  
14 delegation of Representatives, and the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights.