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STATEMENT FROM MAYOR DAVID J. NARKEWICZ REGARDING THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NORTHAMPTON AND FLORENCE DECISION TO TAKE AN UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT INTO SANCTUARY

April 10, 2018

I respect and support the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence (USNF) decision to take an undocumented immigrant into sanctuary and pledge that my administration will not interfere with the congregation's principled act of conscience.

USNF leaders reached out to me last fall seeking my guidance and support prior to their vote to become a sanctuary congregation. I offered both, reminding them of my 2014 executive order declaring Northampton a sanctuary city whose police department would not voluntarily carry out or enforce federal immigration policies. We also reviewed the federal government's designation of religious institutions as "sensitive locations" where ICE enforcement actions should not be conducted. Finally, I put them in communication with several of our city departments to ensure that the congregation would be in compliance with health and safety codes, which they are.

I support the right of the Unitarian Society or any of our faith-based communities to offer sanctuary. Providing aid and comfort to those in need is a central tenet of their faith, the free exercise of which is a bedrock tenet of our U.S. Constitution.

I continue to call upon President Trump to end his hateful and divisive immigration policies that run counter to our proud history as a nation founded and built by immigrants. It is truly a sad day for America when a hardworking and loving mother of three U.S. citizen children married to a U.S. citizen is forced to hide in a church basement while she attempts to resolve her immigration status. Congress can and must act to reverse these policies and fix our broken immigration system.