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The Burmese Advocacy Center (“BAC”) is a not-for-profit corporation that advocates for and on behalf of the diverse ethnic groups originating from Burma.

The BAC works with volunteers and other groups in the community in an effort to resolve problems that may arise as a result of cultural and language barriers. Among the other groups active in this effort are the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation and the Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic. The BAC also seeks to act as a liaison between the Burmese Community and the broader Fort Wayne Community.

The BAC is aware of a recent unfortunate incident in which a local business posted a sign banning Burmese peoples from the premises. Such discrimination is violation of federal, state and local law since it targets an entire community based on its race and national origin. However, the BAC has also learned that the business owner involved has since removed the sign and issued an apology. Though the BAC does not speak for all Burmese people, for its own part, it accepts the apology in the spirit in which it was given. The BAC also understands that this event arose out of a lack of understanding and an inability of the parties to communicate with one another.

Burmese people have been coming to Fort Wayne since the early 1990’s. The first wave of immigrants was mostly students who were fleeing political persecution and seeking asylum in the United States. More recently, refugees fleeing both political and religious persecution have arrived in Fort Wayne. Many of these people spent many years in refugee camps in Thailand where they were afforded no meaningful education or employment opportunities. Many of these refugees do not speak English and are completely unfamiliar with the broader American culture. Because of this, the Burmese face difficult challenges in integrating themselves into the Fort Wayne Community. These realities can create unfortunate barriers between the Burmese population and individuals and businesses in the broader community.

The BAC urges individuals or businesses who encounter difficulties in dealing with Burmese people not to give into discriminatory attitudes that may sometimes arise due to cultural and linguistic barriers. Individuals and businesses wishing assistance in understanding and communicating with Burmese people are encouraged to contact the BAC or another appropriate organization or agency for assistance. The BAC may be contacted at 456-8969 ext 315. The BAC is located at the Community Resource Center for Refugees located at 2826 South Calhoun.

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## § MISSION >

*The Burmese Advocacy Center is committed to improving the quality of life for all members of the Burmese community, regardless of ethnic group or religion.*