The resolution is not anti-immigrant or anti-refugee. The resolution is:

1. Regarding the Tenth Amendment lawsuit

* Consistent with the legislative leadership’s statement to “pause” the federal program in Tennessee so that the state’s Tenth Amendment lawsuit challenging the program, can proceed unimpeded.
* Tennessee’s Tenth Amendment lawsuit objects to the federal government forcing the state to pay certain costs which support the resettlement program but which the federal government has chosen to shift to the states without their consent.
* When the federal government passed the Refugee Act of 1980, they also authorized 3 full years of reimbursement of certain state incurred costs like the state-funded part of the Medicaid program (TennCare) which refugees can access if they meet the eligibility requirements. The 3 full years of state cost reimbursement was for each refugee resettled in the state.
* For refugees who were not eligible for state Medicaid programs, Congress also authorized 3 years of a refugee medical assistance grant.
* Almost immediately after launching the program, Congress began reducing its own appropriation for refugee assistance and by 1991, completely stopped all reimbursement to states and reduced the assistance to refugees not eligible for TennCare and/or TANF, to 8 months.
* Several federal reports admit to the forced cost shift to the states.
* Gov. Bredesen withdrew the state from the resettlement program in late 2007; the Tennessee General Assembly filed it’s lawsuit challenging the federally coerced expenditure of state funds for the federal program in 2017. Lawyers representing the state are currently preparing an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.
* Gov. Lee’s consent undermines the efforts of the General Assembly regarding the lawsuit but also means that he has consented to state taxpayers being forced to pay the state *and* a portion of the federal costs of the program.
* Federal dollars do not cover the short and long-terms costs associated with the federal resettlement program.

2. Refugee placement rules

* The federal rules which provide the per capita Reception & Placement grants from the State Dept. to the resettlement agencies, permit these agencies to place refugees anywhere from 50-100 miles from their offices.
* Refugee resettlement agencies maintain offices and operations in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville and Memphis. The mayors of each county have indicated they will submit their consent letters to the U.S. State Dept. per the President’s Executive Order.
* This means that consenting counties can place refugees in non-consenting counties.
* State Dept. placement data shows that this has already been the pattern in other years.
* Gov. Lee did not seek input from either the legislature or county executives about consenting to refugee placements under the President’s Executive Order.

3. Unmet needs of Tennesseans should take precedence over the federal program

* TennCare currently has a waiting list of over 5,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are unable to fully care for themselves and live in their communities without long-term supports and services. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/health/2019/12/18/tenncare-choices-program-waiting-list-for-autism-intellectual-disability-job-training/4251560002/>
* According to the latest data, over 7,883 people in Tennessee have been homeless in 2018. Over 1,600 were chronically homeless, over 700 veterans and over 500 family units were homeless.
* House Speaker Cameron Sexton has cited an annual cost of $17 – 20,000 dollars for each refugee resettled; those costs are shared by every Tennessee taxpayer.