

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

August 26, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden;

As the people of Afghanistan face an unfolding tragedy, the United States must open its doors to refugees fleeing the devastating consequences of a 20-year U.S. military intervention and 40 years of U.S. involvement in the war. To ensure their safety, we urge you to increase the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program cap to no less than 200,000 when you issue your Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 before October 1st. We also urge you to expand humanitarian parole to provide refuge to vulnerable Afghans who are in grave danger following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

After decades of disastrous U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, one thing is clear: we have a moral responsibility to provide safe harbor and refuge for the Afghan people. The U.S. war in Afghanistan has caused irreparable harm to Afghans as well as to the Americans who served there. Now, the growing humanitarian crisis is further exposing the horrific costs of our endless wars. The United States must do everything in its power to protect those who have borne the brunt of this decades-long conflict, especially Afghans who are at increased risk of persecution or death by the Taliban.

Increasing the U.S. Refugee Admissions Programs cap above 200,000 will mean that hundreds of thousands more people can escape danger to find greater security and hope in the United States. Beyond Afghanistan, refugee crises are also ongoing in other parts of the world — especially as political violence erupts in Ethiopia, Lebanon faces economic collapse, and Haiti grapples with yet another devastating earthquake following the assassination of its president. And as climate change accelerates, destroying homes and ruining crops, displacement is only on the rise. In the face of these overlapping crises, increased refugee protections are vital to ensuring that people can reach safety and rebuild their lives.

In the weeks before your FY22 Presidential Determination for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, there is an immediate need to provide refuge for Afghans. We appreciate your dedicated effort to expedite Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) for Afghans who have assisted the United States but it is imperative to focus on evacuation of all SIV applicants and the thousands of other vulnerable Afghans who now fear for their lives. We request that you provide humanitarian parole to the families of U.S. citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents, SIV applicants and their families, as well as those who would have qualified for the Priority 2 program. Humanitarian parole must also be extended to other vulnerable groups in Afghanistan, including women's rights activists, human rights defenders, religious minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and journalists.

The urgent need to double down on our efforts to welcome and protect refugees is evidenced by the racist, virulent anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiment that exploded over the last decade — often as a result of U.S.-fueled wars — and was further heightened under the last administration and now with the evacuations occurring in Afghanistan. To those questioning if it is really our responsibility to provide refuge for those fleeing conflict, persecution, or dire living conditions — yes, it is. In fact, it is not only our responsibility, but it is our greatest strength.

Mr. President, the time to act to save lives is now. We are ready to work with you to appropriate the necessary funds to be used for humanitarian needs and, specifically, as is necessary to ramp up the evacuation and processing of Afghans and others seeking refuge around the world.

Sincerely,



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



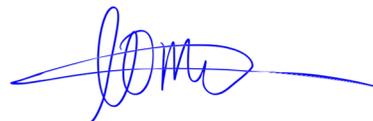
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



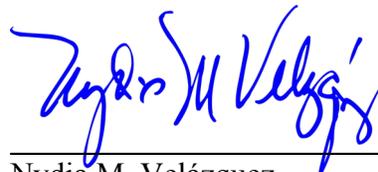
Karen Bass
Member of Congress



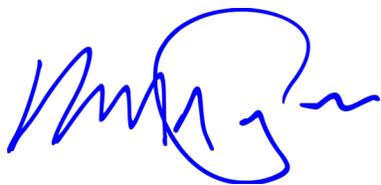
Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress

/s/

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



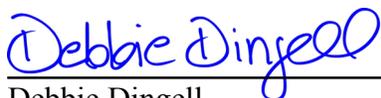
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



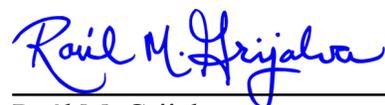
Cori Bush
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



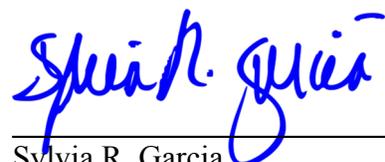
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



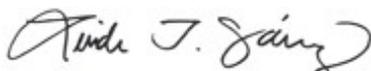
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress