



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

As Members of Congress, our offices worked tirelessly in the aftermath of the Taliban's takeover of Kabul to assist with evacuating Afghan allies who supported the U.S. through two decades of war. We have continued to work on evacuation efforts for those still stranded after the withdrawal of U.S. military and diplomatic presence in Afghanistan on August 31st. Our Afghan allies risked everything to aid in our mission in their country, and it is a moral imperative that we keep the promises we made. We must do more to evacuate those remaining as quickly and safely as possible and ensure that they have adequate resources and support to resettle in the United States.

Since the American withdrawal from Afghanistan, an unprecedented partnership has developed between U.S. government entities and private and non-profit organizations dedicated to ensuring the continuation of vital evacuation and resettlement efforts. The existing collaborative effort between the organizations that make up what is known as the AfghanEvac Coalition, and the Departments of State, Defense, Homeland Security, as well as other government agencies, has enabled us to continue to fulfill the commitment we made to our Afghan friends and allies.

We are encouraged by the appointment of Mr. Curtis Ried as the Special Advisor for Afghan Resettlement overseeing the interagency collaboration. Having a single point person with tasking authority, oversight power, and a dedicated staff appropriate to conduct a multi-year plan to continue this mission is critical to improving coordination, ensuring the appropriate security and background checks are completed, and enabling the whole-of-government approach necessary to sustain this vital work.

Moving forward, there are several additional steps that agencies within the U.S. government should immediately take to enable this vital work to continue more effectively and efficiently and we encourage Mr. Ried to coordinate these steps.

Specifically, we believe the State Department should:

1. Provide remote consular interviews of visa applicants from Afghanistan, particularly for those applicants housed at lily pads, those locations in third countries where evacuees are awaiting processing, where the Departments of State and Defense have the capacity to

- provide a secure connection between applicants and a consular officer in the United States or in a third country;
2. Expand existing lily pads and establish additional lily pads in other countries to enable higher throughput of at-risk Afghans, address capacity issues and prevent transit bottlenecks;
 3. Coordinate with international nongovernmental organizations as well as third country ally and partner governments to—
 - a. Expedite processing for Afghans at unofficial lily pad locations with pending visa applications; and
 - b. Ensure that those Afghans evacuated through private charter flights have a legal pathway to resettlement in the U.S.;
 4. Outline a process for individuals denied humanitarian parole, particularly those who filed before November 5, 2021, to be directly referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program; and
 5. Create a transparent referral process to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for those Afghans referred under the P1 or P2 designation and others who remain at risk due to their association with the United States, including those in third countries and those who are still in Afghanistan.

The Department of Defense should:

1. Expand existing safe havens on US bases in areas most suited for the resettlement of Afghans in the U.S.; and
2. Establish and maintain lily pads on overseas bases in multiple countries to enable expanded capacity and prepare Afghan evacuees for onward movement to the U.S.

The Department of Homeland Security should:

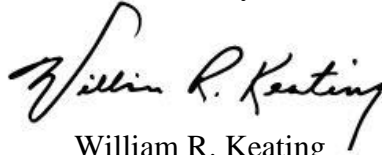
1. Prioritize United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) refugee circuit rides and processing for those individuals with referrals to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program in third countries, including at unofficial lily pad locations;
2. Establish infrastructure to process those Afghans referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program through the P-1 or P-2 designation, including in third countries and those who remain at unofficial lily pad locations such as the U.A.E. humanitarian camp;
3. Waive all humanitarian parole processing fees for Afghans;
4. Refund humanitarian parole filing fees for any denied case that was submitted prior to the issuance of USCIS guidance on humanitarian parole for Afghans issued on November 5, 2021; and
5. Expand staffing to streamline the facilitation of immigration parole program processing for at-risk Afghans.

These agencies, along with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), should also work collaboratively to establish mental health support services for those impacted by these events, including evacuated Afghans, American volunteers and public servants, and military personnel and veterans involved in the withdrawal. We believe HHS should lead this effort to ensure that this support is ongoing and comprehensive.

The United States has taken historic action to evacuate tens of thousands of vulnerable people from Afghanistan, but many of our allies remain at risk because of the work they did in aid of our mission there over the last 20 years. We must do as much as we can to ensure their safety, and the steps outlined above will help in that endeavor.

The undersigned represent a bipartisan group of legislators who stand together in support of the continued efforts outlined above. Congress stands ready to give the administration the tools it needs to complete this mission.

Sincerely,



William R. Keating
Chair, Subcommittee on Europe, Energy,
the Environment, and Cyber



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



James Langevin
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Rep Henry C. "Hank" Johnson
Member of Congress



Karen Bass
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
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Jim Cooper
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Juan Vargas
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Scott R. Peters
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
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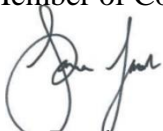
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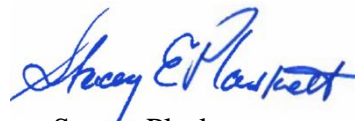
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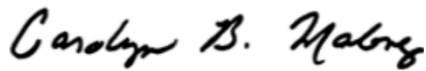
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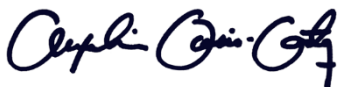
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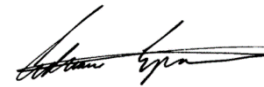
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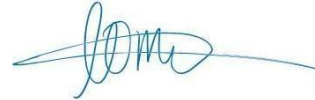
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