

EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION table.

Bethany Christian
Services

Council for Christian
Colleges and Universities

Ethics and Religious
Liberty Commission of
the
Southern Baptist
Convention

Faith and Community
Empowerment

National Association of
Evangelicals

National Latino
Evangelical Coalition

World Relief

September 20, 2021

Dear Members of Congress,

Over the past few weeks, nearly 50,000 Afghan evacuees have arrived to the United States to start their lives anew in freedom and safety. In the coming weeks and months, most of these individuals will be resettled in communities throughout the country. Many of them were at particular risk because of their support for and affiliation with the U.S. military or other elements of the U.S. government's operations in Afghanistan. Others feared persecution on account of their affiliation with a U.S.-based non-governmental organization, their gender or their status as a religious or ethnic minority.

Because of the urgent humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, many vulnerable Afghans will be paroled into the United States, rather than being admitted through the traditional refugee resettlement process. Many of these individuals fled taking little to nothing with them yet eagerly look forward to rebuilding their lives anew in the United States. Given the temporary nature of humanitarian parolee status and the urgent need to fully support Afghans as they arrive, we urge you to ensure that they receive the same support and legal benefits afforded to refugees.

Local churches and other non-governmental organizations within our communities are already stepping up to welcome our new Afghan neighbors in remarkable ways, motivated by the many biblical calls to practice hospitality and to honor the image of God in all people. Many evangelical Christians in the U.S. feel a particular obligation to these Afghan allies because our government made a commitment to protect them and their families on account of their service to and sacrifices for our nation.

But while churches are offering volunteers, prayers and both financial and in-kind donations via refugee resettlement agencies, government also has an important role in both thoroughly vetting the individuals who are arriving and in assisting these individuals to resettle and integrate into new communities, which will help newly arriving Afghans as well as the communities receiving them. We urge you to authorize and appropriate the funding necessary both to safely process Afghan evacuees and to extend to those paroled into the United States the same benefits and supports available to those resettled as refugees. We also urge you to pass legislation that would allow Afghans to adjust status to a lawful permanent resident once in the United States.

Without a change to law, individuals with humanitarian parole status will face an uncertain future, lacking a clear, direct path to *permanent* legal status and eventual citizenship. While many may ultimately qualify for asylum, our asylum system is woefully backlogged already, and adding tens of thousands of new cases could keep our Afghan neighbors in a legal limbo for years.

Even as we urge you to make these legal changes so that our country offers a dignified welcome to the Afghans who were able to be evacuated, we also urge you not to forget the tens of thousands of vulnerable Afghans – including but not limited to the many with pending Special Immigrant Visas cases as a result of their service to the U.S. government – whom our government has left behind in Afghanistan. We urge you to do everything possible to ensure that those at risk of persecution and death are able to escape and, when appropriate, to be resettled and welcomed to the U.S.

Sincerely,

Evangelical Immigration Table Principal Leaders:

Myal Greene, President & CEO, World Relief

Shirley V. Hoogstra, President, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Hyepin Im, President & CEO, Faith and Community Empowerment

Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals

Brent Leatherwood, Acting President, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Chris Palusky, President & CEO, Bethany Christian Services

Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition