

EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION table.

August 10, 2022

Dear Members of Congress,

One year ago this month, Afghanistan fell to the Taliban, triggering a frantic effort to evacuate U.S. citizens and allies to safety. In the weeks that followed, tens of thousands of Afghans came to the United States after being processed and vetted in third-country locations. The American people – including many evangelical Christians, responding in ways rooted in their biblical faith – have stepped up in remarkable, sacrificial ways to welcome these newcomers, many of whom faced particular threats because of their association with the United States.

However, while these Afghans indeed fled a clearly credible fear of Taliban persecution and thus almost certainly meet the legal definition of a refugee, the vast majority of them were not formally admitted with refugee status. Had they been admitted as refugees, as they mark the one-year anniversary of their presence in the U.S., these individuals would be allowed and required to apply for Lawful Permanent Resident – and be on track to pursue naturalization four years later as they fully embrace this country that has embraced them.

Instead, most Afghans have only temporary parole and employment authorization that bears an expiration date, with no direct path to pursue permanent residency. As individuals and church communities have welcomed and built friendships with Afghan arrivals over the past year, they have heard the significant stress that this indefinite status has placed on these new residents of their communities.

Tragically, there is no likelihood that these new neighbors will be able to safely return to Afghanistan any time in the foreseeable future. They now want to rebuild their lives in the United States – with the certainty that they fully belong here, a confidence that only permanent legal status can provide.

These Afghans, many of whom served the U.S. mission in Afghanistan at significant risk to themselves and their families, have done all that is asked of them and followed the process our government established for them to seek refuge in the U.S. Our military led a remarkable and costly effort to evacuate them to safety. Churches and other community organizations have given generously of their time and resources to ensure that their new Afghan neighbors feel welcomed.



Now, we need Congress to act quickly to do your part, passing legislation to allow Afghans paroled into the U.S. to apply for permanent legal status, treating them just as those formally admitted as refugees are treated under U.S. law.

Lastly, in addition to the stress they feel because of their lack of permanent legal status, many of the Afghans who have arrived are also deeply concerned for the wellbeing of family members and other loved ones who were not able to be evacuated, many of whom remain in Afghanistan and others of whom have escaped to other countries. We also urge you to do everything possible to ensure that the U.S. continues to welcome Afghans who are facing or have fled persecution from the Taliban, including urging the administration to consider further requests for humanitarian parole and to invest in a more robust, nimble refugee resettlement process.

Sincerely,

Evangelical Immigration Table Organizations:

Bethany Christian Services

Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Faith and Community Empowerment

National Association of Evangelicals

National Latino Evangelical Coalition

The Wesleyan Church

World Relief