

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write to request that the next emergency legislative package related to COVID-19 include protections for refugees, asylees, and other immigrants in order to ensure that the needs of our newest neighbors are met during this time of crisis.

Firstly, we request \$642 million in Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) funds for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) for resettlement services. This funding is critical to ensuring that recent refugee and special immigrant arrivals receive direct assistance, such as cash and medical assistance, housing/rent, utilities, transportation, food, and health needs unavailable through normally operating public channels. And given that recently-arrived refugees are unable to receive the cash rebate as part of the CARES Act, we request a technical fix that clarifies that all refugees, including those who were admitted during calendar years 2019 and 2020 should be treated as "resident aliens" and eligible for the direct cash rebate and thus eligible.

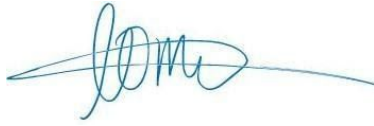
Additionally, in order to ensure that ORR implements the funding in good faith and in the interest of public health, we request that Congress direct ORR to increase refugee cash and medical assistance to eighteen months, increase the Matching Grant per capita by \$2,000, expand the Preferred Communities program threefold, and ensure that resettlement agencies are able to maintain their infrastructure and capacity at a level to continue to serve newly arrived refugees, previously arrived refugees, and other populations of concern who remain statutorily eligible for integration services, and to ensure that there is capacity for future arrivals to be adequately served.

We would also like to see report language and guidance that accounts for:

- Floor funding to resettlement agencies to maintain the resettlement infrastructure;
- The need to continue facilitating unaccompanied refugee minor admissions wherever possible;
- The need to extend validity periods for visas and security checks;
- The need to extend the authorization dates of recently-expired travel documents;
- The need to extend application deadlines.

Refugees, special immigrants, and immigrant visa applicants are important members of American communities. Refugees are the most vetted travelers to the United States and face rigorous security checks that take years to complete. Further, immigrants often wait for years and go to great lengths and expense to obtain visas to enter the United States. Afghan SIVs in particular have been persecuted for their faithful and valuable service to the U.S. government. Now is the time to ensure that we do not turn our backs on those we promised to welcome.

Respectfully,



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

Additional Signers

Rep. Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Rep. Earl Blumenauer
Rep. André Carson
Rep. Judy Chu
Rep. Veronica Escobar
Rep. Adriano Espaillat
Rep. Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Rep. Al Green
Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva
Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton
Rep. Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr.
Rep. Barbara Lee
Rep. Ted W. Lieu
Rep. Zoe Lofgren
Rep. Alan Lowenthal
Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney
Rep. James P. McGovern
Rep. Jerrold Nadler
Rep. Grace F. Napolitano
Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Rep. Mark Pocan
Rep. Ayanna Pressley
Rep. David E. Price
Rep. Mike Quigley
Rep. Jamie Raskin
Rep. Jan Schakowsky
Rep. Adam Smith
Rep. Darren Soto
Rep. Rashida Tlaib
Rep. Juan Vargas
Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez
Rep. Peter J. Visclosky
Rep. Peter Welch