

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 27, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We are writing to ask you to create two specialized leadership positions to address the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. We ask that you appoint a lead person within the Executive Office of the President to oversee the operational challenges of providing safe passage from Afghanistan for American citizens, lawful permanent residents, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applicants and holders, and other Afghans at risk whom we promised to assist following the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan. Further, we ask you to establish a Special Envoy at the State Department to marshal our diplomatic efforts with allies and partners to hold the Taliban accountable to the commitments it has made with regard to freedom of movement, humanitarian support for the Afghan people, and protecting Afghan women and girls.

We realize that having no U.S. presence in Afghanistan makes helping those who we have promised to evacuate much harder – but the government must remain committed to negotiations with the Taliban, working with third-countries, making it possible for Afghans to obtain official exit documents (some of whom are reaching Pakistan only to be returned to the Taliban in Afghanistan for lack of documentation), and critically, working with former service members and humanitarian organizations to get evacuees out of Afghanistan.

The situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate, as the Taliban search for Afghans that helped coalition forces as well as their families. Many of these people have been forced into hiding, moving from house to house to evade torture, capture or execution. The United States must continue to support their evacuation from the country.

In addition to the approximately 100 American citizens that the State Department estimates remain in Afghanistan, we know of many judges, educators, journalists (including Voice of America journalists and their families), and others who are now being persecuted under the Taliban regime, along with many individuals who assisted U.S. humanitarian assistance programs but were not evacuated by the August 31 deadline.

As you know, there are also tens of thousands of individuals trying to leave Afghanistan as refugees or asylum seekers. Women, girls, LGBTQIA+ individuals, religious leaders, former

Afghan government workers, anti-Taliban activists, and even NGO contractors who worked for the U.S. Embassy have been threatened or attacked by the Taliban and continue to be at great risk. The numbers of those at risk is growing as Afghans give shelter to those individuals the Taliban are hunting.

The U.S. must develop a comprehensive plan to deal with these challenges. To do so, and to execute on that plan, we believe there needs to be dedicated, overarching leadership at the highest level within the administration. With the deteriorating conditions on the ground, we need to marshal the resources across government as well as the humanitarian assistance community, with centralized leadership in the Executive Office of the President. Enhanced interagency coordination is also necessary for effective screening of the large number of SIVs and other Afghan nationals both for U.S. national security interests and for faster processing. There must also be government coordination with and assistance to U.S. humanitarian groups. All of this must be done rapidly and with purpose.

Finally, a new Special Envoy at the State Department with a broad remit is needed to lead efforts with the international community, to coordinate with countries adjacent to Afghanistan and to hold the Taliban accountable to the commitments it made on freedom of movement, humanitarian support for the Afghan people, and protecting Afghan women and girls. Operationally, the Taliban need outside assistance in operating an international airport. There must also be deeper cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international humanitarian organizations.

Rescuing Americans is a floor not a ceiling. A focus on evacuating Americans – to the exclusion of others we have promised to get out – is unacceptable. Civilian lives are in danger and the United States' international reputation is at risk. While we are pleased that you designated a lead to oversee the administration's Afghan resettlement effort in the United States, we urge you to fill these senior government roles to provide leadership for an accelerated, orderly effort to bring the thousands of people in Afghanistan at risk to safety. Thank you for the consideration of this request.

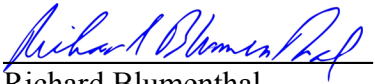
Sincerely,



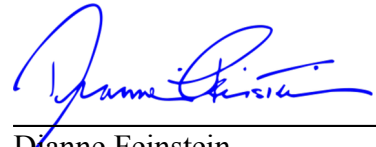
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



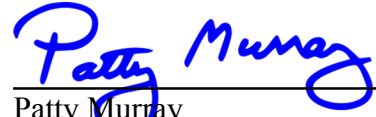
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



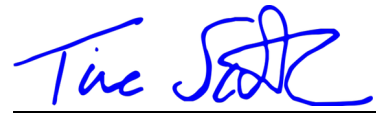
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Tina Smith  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator