

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 11, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We write to you with deep concern over President Donald Trump's recently announced so-called travel ban and its striking inconsistency with the Department of Homeland Security's justification for termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Afghanistan. We respectfully request that you provide detailed information regarding the State Department's assessment of the conditions in Afghanistan to clarify the Trump Administration's position.

On June 4, 2025, President Trump announced via a proclamation entitled "Restricting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats" that he was imposing travel restrictions for foreign nationals entering the United States.<sup>1</sup> Among the countries included in this proclamation is Afghanistan. Specifically, the proclamation bans most entry into the United States from Afghanistan, stating the following as justification:

"The Taliban, a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) group, controls Afghanistan. Afghanistan lacks a competent or cooperative central authority for issuing passports or civil documents and it does not have appropriate screening and vetting measures."<sup>2</sup>

As you know, the U.S. visa vetting system is a multi-layered process involving extensive background checks, biometric data collection, interagency information sharing, and screening against a range of national security databases that works to keep residents of our country safe. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, "[m]ore than 40 national security experts from across the political spectrum have unequivocally told courts that travelers to the U.S. should not be vetted on religious or national stereotypes, but rather on specific threat information."<sup>3</sup> Categorically banning foreign nationals from coming to the United States based on their country of origin is discriminatory and harmful to our nation's international relations and security interests.

The proclamation further states that you, as the Secretary of State, were directed to make this determination, in consultation with other members of the President's Cabinet including the Secretary of Homeland Security. Per the proclamation, you ultimately determined that "a number of countries remain deficient with regards to screening and vetting," including the country of Afghanistan. Placing a blanket ban on another country's citizens is a severe action, and the title of the proclamation states that it is being done "to protect the United States from foreign terrorists and other national security and public safety threats." This determination appears to be at odds with the Trump Administration's stated position just weeks ago. On May 12, 2025, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Kristi Noem announced that DHS was ending TPS for

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<sup>1</sup> Restricting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats (June 4, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/06/restricting-the-entry-of-foreign-nationals-to-protect-the-united-states-from-foreign-terrorists-and-other-national-security-and-public-safety-threats/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Extreme Vetting: Myths and Facts, Brennan Center for Justice (October 11, 2017), <http://www.brennancenter.org/ourwork/research-reports/extreme-vetting-myths-and-facts>.

Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> The basis offered in the Federal Register notice<sup>5</sup> for this decision was “notable improvements in the security and economic situation such that requiring the return of Afghan nationals to Afghanistan does not pose a threat to their personal safety due to armed conflict or extraordinary and temporary conditions.” Specifically, the notice points to:

- the totality of Taliban rule and lessening overt presence of ISIS-K and other various terrorist organizations;
- a decrease in large-scale violence and humanitarian need;
- a growing economy; and
- increased tourism, with tourists “sharing their experiences on social media, highlighting the peaceful countryside, welcoming locals, and the cultural heritage.”

Further, Secretary Noem found that “permitting Afghan nationals to remain temporarily in the United States is contrary to the national interest of the United States.”<sup>6</sup> The Federal Register notice cited consultation with your Department in making this determination.

These seemingly incompatible recent decisions indicate a troubling lack of consistency in the Administration’s analysis of country conditions in Afghanistan. Either Afghanistan is safe for the return of Afghan refugees and nationals that fled following the return of the Taliban to power or it is not.

According to Human Rights Watch, in 2024, Taliban authorities intensified their crackdown on human rights, especially against women and girls, who are banned from attending secondary school or university and are unable to move freely. The Taliban also continues to detain and torture journalists, curtailing free speech and media. The 2023 U.S. State Department Human Rights Report covering Afghanistan found that women’s rights rapidly declined and restrictions on freedom of expression increased. The horrific human rights conditions in Afghanistan are unsafe for Afghan nationals to return to and returning would put their personal safety at immediate risk. Additionally, the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), the Afghan affiliate of the Islamic State (ISIS), continues to launch attacks against ethnic and religious minorities and against the Taliban, leading to innocent civilian casualties. If Afghan nationals are forced to return to Afghanistan, they will be caught in the crossfire between the Taliban and ISKP.

As you are aware, many Afghan allies that received TPS stood shoulder to shoulder with American servicemembers for nearly two decades during the war in Afghanistan. Many fled to the United States out of fear of persecution by the Taliban or retaliation for such cooperation with the United States. It is unsafe for political targets of the Taliban to be forced to return against their will. TPS protections must be maintained for Afghan nationals in the United States.

We would request that you immediately provide answers to the following questions:

1. Please provide detailed reports or information that the State Department is relying upon in advising the Department of Homeland Security and the White House as to the conditions in Afghanistan.

<sup>4</sup> DHS Terminating Temporary Protected Status for Afghanistan, USCIS (May 12, 2025), <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/dhs-terminating-temporary-protected-status-for-afghanistan>.






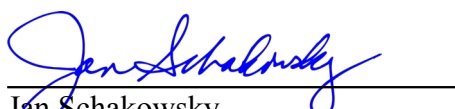

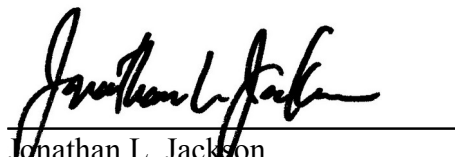

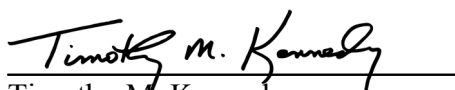
<sup>5</sup> Termination of the Designation of Afghanistan for Temporary Protected Status, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (May 13, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/05/13/2025-08201/termination-of-the-designation-of-afghanistan-for-temporary-protected-status>.

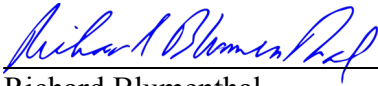
<sup>6</sup> *Id* at 4.

2. How can you assure Afghan nationals fearing persecution in Afghanistan that the Taliban will not retaliate against them based upon their relationship with the United States?

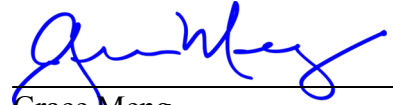
Congress has a strong interest in understanding what information the Trump Administration is using to carry out its policies and how it is making national security decisions that impact all of our constituents. We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

  
Glenn Ivey  
Member of Congress  
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator  
Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator  
Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress  
Dan Goldman  
Member of Congress  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress  
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress  
Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress  
Jonathan L. Jackson  
Member of Congress  
Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress  
Timothy M. Kennedy  
Member of Congress  
Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



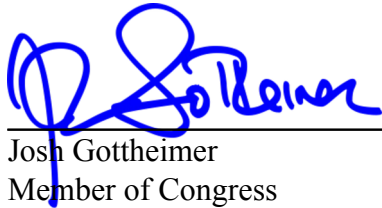
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



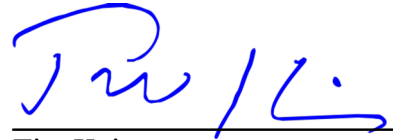
Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



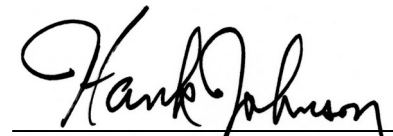
Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



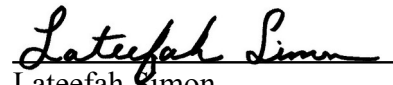
Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress



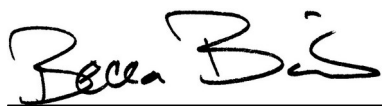
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



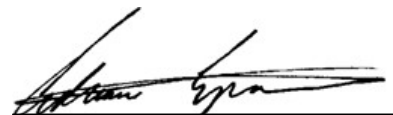
Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



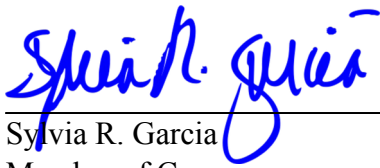
Lateefah Simon  
Member of Congress



Becca Balint  
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



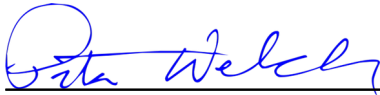
Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



Peter Welch  
United States Senator



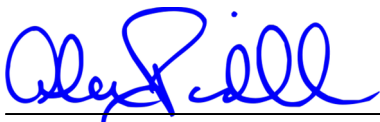
Lizzie Fletcher  
Member of Congress



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



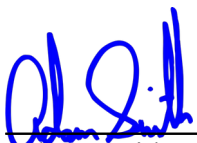
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



Bill Foster  
Member of Congress



Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

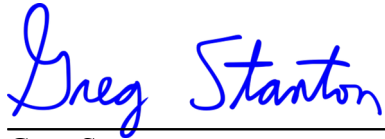


Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



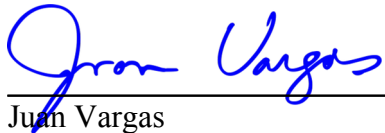
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Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Greg Stanton  
Member of Congress



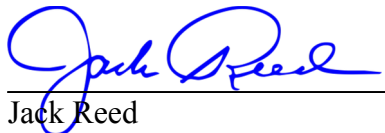
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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress




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Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress



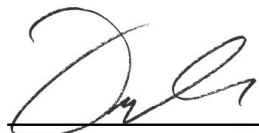
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Jack Reed  
United States Senator



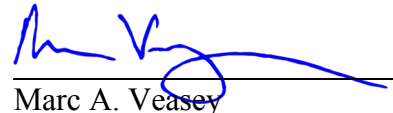
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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



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Troy A. Carter, Sr.  
Member of Congress



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Marc A. Veasey  
Member of Congress



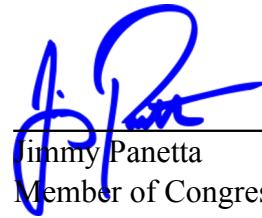
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Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress



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Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



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Tina Smith  
United States Senator



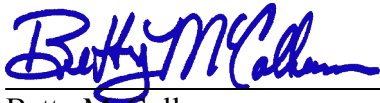
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Kevin Mullin  
Member of Congress



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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



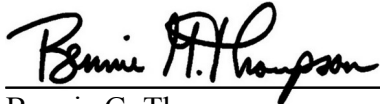
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



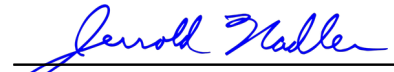
André Carson  
Member of Congress



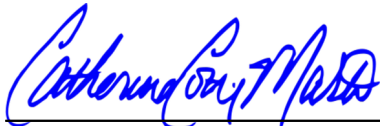
Robert J. Menendez  
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



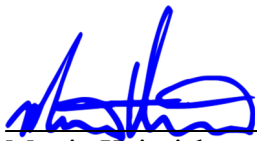
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



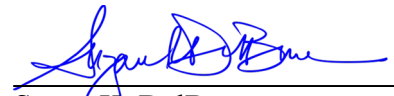
Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Suzan K. DelBene  
Member of Congress



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Julie Johnson  
Member of Congress



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

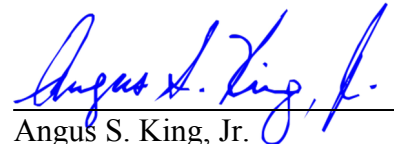


Patty Murray  
United States Senator



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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs



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Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



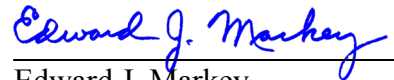
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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



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Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress