November 4, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
H-307, The Capitol
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Granger, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As you work to finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Consolidated Appropriations bill, we urge you to include the Senate Appropriations Committee-passed language authorizing 4,000 visas for the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program.¹ The authorization of these visas is supported by the President’s FY 2020 budget request and is critical to the more than 18,000 Afghan principal applicants currently in the pipeline.

The Afghan SIV program was first enacted through the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 to provide a life-saving path to safety for Afghan nationals who face serious danger as a result of their work alongside U.S. troops, diplomats, and contractors. Since that time, the program has been extended and reformed numerous times, each time with significant bipartisan and bicameral support. This Congress, more than 40 of our colleagues have cosponsored the Afghan Allies Protection Act (H.R. 2796/S.1474), legislation to authorize 4,000 Afghan SIVs.

In FY 2019, both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees recognized the importance of the SIV program and demonstrated their shared commitment to honoring our allies by authorizing 4,000 additional visas. Congress must continue this support so that the State Department is able to issue visas to Afghans who face imminent threats from the Taliban, al Qaeda, and other hostile groups because of their service to the U.S. and our allies.

According to the latest figures from the State Department, there are more than 18,000 Afghans at some stage in the application process, and approximately 5,000 visas remaining. The White House recently reaffirmed the importance of the SIV program in their Statement of

¹ Section 7025(m)(11) of S. 2583
Administrative Policy for the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act: “The Administration urges the Committee…to consider including its full request for 4,000 Afghan SIVs to ensure continued support of the Afghans who have worked alongside our troops and diplomats.” Failure to authorize these visas would also send a discouraging message to individuals who may have otherwise considered assisting the United States during future engagements.

Again, we respectfully urge you to continue your support for our Afghan allies and include the Senate Appropriations Committee-passed language authorizing 4,000 additional SIVs. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Adam Kinzinger  
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

Steve Stivers  
Member of Congress

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress

Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress

Colin Allred  
Member of Congress
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

Don Young
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

Bill Johnson
Member of Congress

Scott Peters
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Brad Wenstrup
Member of Congress

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

Denny Heck
Member of Congress