

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 23, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chair Leahy and Vice Chair Shelby:

We write to request that you support the use of appropriated federal funds to fully compensate Virginia hospitals, localities, and other health stakeholders that have helped provide necessary medical care to Afghan evacuees who have recently arrived in the United States.

The effort to evacuate and relocate Afghans to the United States, currently as part of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), has been among the most challenging and complex missions our country has undertaken. In the span of a few weeks, the U.S. and its allies evacuated over 120,000 people, including Afghan refugees, Special Immigrant Visa holders, American citizens, and associated family members, all fleeing the Taliban takeover and violence in Afghanistan. For many, the journey to safety and freedom has been supported by a combination of federal and state agencies, countless localities, non-governmental organizations, individuals, and other OAW partners.

As you know, Virginia continues to serve as a bridge to freedom for many of these evacuees. As we've traveled throughout the Commonwealth, we have heard from citizens and local elected officials alike that their communities are honored to participate in this historic and worthy operation. From arrival at Dulles International Airport to housing and processing at the Dulles Expo Center, Fort Lee, Fort Pickett, and Marine Corps Base Quantico, the United States would have been unable to shelter and care for these refugees as quickly without the resources provided by the Commonwealth.

Virginians continue to work to support Operation Allies Welcome at all levels. The Commonwealth and state-level agencies, as well as many localities, have all generously offered resources, and we have no doubt that Virginians will continue to assist however they are able.

To date, the U.S. has welcomed over 53,000 Afghan evacuees, and tens of thousands more are expected in the coming weeks. Although evacuees receive health screening en route

and upon arrival, including being tested for COVID-19, and are provided some medical support at the military installations where they are housed for processing, in many instances these Afghan individuals and families require additional medical assistance beyond what is currently being provided directly by the federal government or the military. These cases have collectively generated a demand for medical care in the communities, hospitals, and health centers surrounding processing installations. In Virginia, numerous hospitals and other entities have provided our Afghan allies with this medical attention as a part of the resettlement operation, including providing critical care, patient tracking, labor and delivery services, and general inpatient hospital care, among other vital measures of support. Virginia hospitals continue to make available medical care to evacuees even as they operate near full capacity due to the ongoing surge of COVID-19 cases, which has been exacerbated by the highly contagious Delta variant.

Despite these challenges, many Virginia hospitals and localities have utilized their existing resources and scaled up their capabilities to meet the needs of these new arrivals in their communities. The cost of providing these services will continue to mount as long as Afghans are being housed and processed at nearby installations. It is imperative that the Administration reimburse Virginia hospitals, localities, and emergency response departments for their efforts in a timely fashion and provide comprehensive information on how that reimbursement process will proceed. Although some of these stakeholders have reached out to federal agencies to request more insight into reimbursement, it remains unclear which specific agency is responsible for addressing these requests—a question of oversight that should also be addressed. The White House’s decision to request \$6.4 billion in emergency spending to pay for the ongoing relocation of Afghan allies demonstrates a clear recognition that this work continues to require additional investment.

The unprecedented mission to resettle tens of thousands of Afghans will require the federal government to continue collaborating with state agencies, hospitals, and localities to address the medical needs of our Afghan allies and the broader Virginia community. As countless stakeholders in the Commonwealth work to help the U.S. government meet these needs, we urge you to ensure that they are compensated in a fair and expeditious manner.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator