

August 27, 2021

The Honorable Eleanor Norton Holmes
2136 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Norton Holmes,

The Certification for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI), along with the co-signing associations, writes to you today to voice solidarity with the Afghan community and express our deep concern about the provision of interpreting services to the Afghan refugees and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders who are and will be resettled in the U.S.

While some of the Afghan refugees and SIV holders are former interpreters who have worked with military, government, and non-governmental organizations of the U.S. and allies, their family members and other vulnerable Afghans do not speak English to the extent that they can navigate the U.S. health, social, and legal services without the help of an interpreter. Granted that the Afghan languages (Dari, Pashto, etc.) are not among the current frequently used interpretation languages, we are concerned that many of the newly resettled Afghans will not receive adequate opportunities to access vital services available to them.

Please urge your Congressional colleagues to take necessary steps at the national and local levels to ensure that the language access needs of the new Afghan arrivals are ensured at every step of their resettlement experience.

We ask the Congress to undertake the following steps:

- Immediately allocate additional resources and funding for local community-based organizations and refugee resettlement agencies so that they can properly support the Afghan community already in the U.S and new arrivals, making sure their needs are met - including professional interpretation - throughout their resettlement experience.
- Commit to providing opportunities for former U.S. Afghan interpreters to receive any necessary training to continue working as professional interpreters, including allocating funds to support interpreter certification.
- Allocate additional resources and funding to local healthcare providers for professional interpretation for the Afghan patients and their family members.

For more than a decade, CCHI has been committed to ensuring immigrants and refugees have professional language support. U.S. leadership matters. Please monitor the issue of language access to services as Afghan refugees and SIV holders arrive to the U.S.

I would be happy to discuss this further.

Respectfully,
Idolly F. Oliva, CCHI Chair

American Translators Association (ATA)
Association of Language Companies (ALC)
National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT)
National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC)