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(Original Signature of Member)

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To provide assistance to Afghan nationals who have suffered persecution based on their occupation, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. SPEIER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To provide assistance to Afghan nationals who have suffered persecution based on their occupation, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. AFGHAN REFUGEES OF SPECIAL HUMANI-**
4 **TARIAN CONCERN.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State, in con-
6 sultation with the Secretary of Homeland Security, shall
7 designate as Priority 2 refugees of special humanitarian
8 concern the following individuals:

1 (1) Individuals who—

2 (A) are or were habitual residents of Af-
3 ghanistan;

4 (B) are nationals of Afghanistan or state-
5 less persons;

6 (C) have suffered persecution or have a
7 well-founded fear of persecution; and

8 (D) share common occupational character-
9 istics that identify them as targets of persecu-
10 tion in Afghanistan on account of race, religion,
11 nationality, membership in a particular social
12 group, or political opinion, as determined by the
13 Secretary of State, including the following:

14 (i) Civil servants.

15 (ii) Public officials and government
16 personnel, including members of the peace
17 negotiation team.

18 (iii) Human rights defenders.

19 (iv) Women’s rights defenders.

20 (v) Journalists and media personnel.

21 (vi) Legal professionals.

22 (2) Individuals who—

23 (A) are or were habitual residents of Af-
24 ghanistan;

1 (B) are nationals of Afghanistan or state-
2 less persons; and

3 (C) were employed in Afghanistan for an
4 aggregate period of not less than 1 year by—

5 (i) a media or nongovernmental orga-
6 nization based in the United States; or

7 (ii) an organization or entity that has
8 received a grant from, or entered into a co-
9 operative agreement or contract with, the
10 United States Government.

11 (3) Individuals who—

12 (A) are or were habitual residents of Af-
13 ghanistan;

14 (B) are nationals of Afghanistan or state-
15 less persons; and

16 (C) are beneficiaries of an approved I-130
17 Petition for Alien Relative.

18 (b) PROCESSING OF AFGHAN REFUGEES.—The proc-
19 essing of individuals who are or were habitual residents
20 of Afghanistan, are nationals of Afghanistan or stateless
21 persons, and have suffered persecution, or have a well-
22 founded fear of persecution, for classification as refugees
23 may occur in Afghanistan or in a third country.

24 (c) ELIGIBILITY FOR ADMISSION AS A REFUGEE.—

25 An alien may not be denied the opportunity to apply for

1 admission as a refugee under this section solely because
2 such alien qualifies as an immediate relative of a national
3 of the United States or is eligible for admission to the
4 United States under any other immigrant classification.

5 (d) IDENTIFICATION OF OTHER PERSECUTED
6 GROUPS.—The Secretary of State, or the designee of the
7 Secretary, is authorized to classify other groups of individ-
8 uals who are or were nationals and residents of Afghani-
9 stan as Priority 2 refugees of special humanitarian con-
10 cern.

11 (e) SATISFACTION OF OTHER REQUIREMENTS.—
12 Aliens designated as Priority 2 refugees of special humani-
13 tarian concern under this section shall be deemed to sat-
14 isfy the requirements under section 207 of the Immigra-
15 tion and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1157) for admission
16 to the United States.

17 (f) TIMELINE FOR PROCESSING APPLICATIONS.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State and
19 the Secretary of Homeland Security shall ensure
20 that all steps under the control of the United States
21 Government incidental to the approval of such appli-
22 cations, including required screenings and back-
23 ground checks, are completed not later than 6
24 months after the date on which an eligible applicant
25 submits an application under subsection (a).

1 (2) EXCEPTION.—Notwithstanding paragraph
2 (1), the United States Refugee Admission Program
3 may take additional time to process applications de-
4 scribed in paragraph (1) if satisfaction of national
5 security concerns requires such additional time, if
6 the Secretary of Homeland Security, or the designee
7 of the Secretary, has determined that the applicant
8 meets the requirements for status as a refugee of
9 special humanitarian concern under this section and
10 has so notified the applicant.

11 (g) ADDITIONAL FORMS OF IMMIGRATION RELIEF.—
12 The Secretary of State shall consider additional forms of
13 immigration relief available to Afghans and coordinate
14 with embassies, nongovernmental organizations, and the
15 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to re-
16 ceive referrals for individuals who—

17 (1) are or were habitual residents of Afghani-
18 stan;

19 (2) are nationals of Afghanistan or stateless
20 persons; and

21 (3) are described in subsection (a) or otherwise
22 face humanitarian concerns.