



VA AAPI CAUCUS

Virginia Asian American & Pacific Islander Caucus

PRESS ADVISORY

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Virginia AAPI Caucus Calls on the United States Government and Other Nations to Assist and Protect the Safe Passage of Afghans at Risk of Persecution

Richmond, VA - Members of the Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) express our profound grief at the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. We urge immediate action to secure safe passage and expedite processing and resettlement of those Afghans who fought for freedom and democracy during the past two decades.

As the Taliban rapidly takes control of Afghanistan, many Afghans are at risk. It is incumbent on the United States and our allies to protect the people that the Taliban targets: translators and others who courageously assisted the U.S. military and our allies, democracy and human rights advocates, women's rights advocates, academics, journalists, persecuted minorities, and other innocent civilians.

This dire situation has particular resonance for many in the AAPI communities in Virginia. Thousands of Vietnamese Americans in the Commonwealth experienced firsthand the fall of Saigon in April 1975.

The current developments in Afghanistan, while clearly different in its circumstances, resurface many of our immigrant communities' traumas: desperate people put into impossible situations, fleeing their homelands in order to move their families to safety, while experiencing deep concerns about the welfare of those who remain.

"I fled Vietnam with my parents as boat refugees when I was just seven months old," said **First Vice Chair Del. Kathy Tran** (HD-42, Fairfax). "My family knows firsthand the pain and desperation of fleeing one's country in the wake of persecution, when the only option left is to leave the country you know and the people you love. We must do everything in our power to protect and help Afghans situated similarly."

VAAPIC understands and appreciates the very difficult choices facing President Joe Biden, and we commend Virginia Governor Ralph Northam's leadership in ensuring Virginia will be a safe harbor for Afghans seeking refuge.

As it did at the end of the Vietnam War, the United States should once again offer all humanitarian aid possible by resettling refugees in America, and urging our allies to do the same.

VAAPIC Chair Del. Mark Keam (HD-35, Fairfax) said, "My mother, siblings, and I narrowly escaped Communism in late April 1975 when we were fortunate to board one of the last commercial flights out of Saigon. Unfortunately, my father did not make it then, so I empathize with the Afghans gathering at

Kabul airport. I am proud that Virginia has already welcomed some Afghans to Fort Lee, and I hope more of them will be able to find refuge, and live out their hopes and dreams here in the Commonwealth.”

VAAPIC will continue to monitor the situation in Afghanistan and advocate for the safe and expeditious resettlement of Afghans at risk of persecution.

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Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) is a legislative organization recognized by the General Assembly to serve as a collaborative voice for Virginia's Asian American and Pacific Islander communities by identifying public issues of interest and to develop formal positions, facilitate discussions, and advocate for positive policy outcomes. @VAAPICaucus