

## Upwardly Global Urges Congress to Pass Afghan Adjustment Act

*Legislation could impact \$646M annually in U.S. economy*

NEW YORK – Upwardly Global, a leading workforce development organization supporting professional immigrants and refugees, is urging Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act (AAA), which was recently introduced with bipartisan support in both the Senate ([S.4787](#)) and House of Representatives ([H.R. 8685](#)). The legislation would help expedite pathways to permanent, legal residency for Afghans, allowing professionals in this group to restart their career in the U.S. with the potential to contribute \$646 million annually to the U.S. economy.

“Upwardly Global is pleased to endorse the Afghan Adjustment Act and urges Congress to pass the legislation,” said Jina Krause-Vilmar, Upwardly Global CEO and President. “The Afghan Adjustment Act is a chance to honor our commitment to our Afghan allies and ensure they and their families can remain safely in the U.S. Upwardly Global has been supporting thousands of Afghan professionals, and we know that their experience and skills can help us address “unprecedented” labor shortages across key industries.”

The legislation would, among other things, open career opportunities for Afghans by lessening the burden on the special immigrant visa (SIV) and asylum processes, whose backlogs and pending applications put over 1.4 million Afghans, a portion of whom are already employed in the U.S., at risk of losing their jobs or deportation if there is a lapse in their immigration status. Newly released [data](#) from Upwardly Global shows that Afghan professionals have the potential to contribute \$646 million per year to the U.S. economy if adequate career pathways are available, underscoring the need for the AAA to pass.

An estimated 90,000 Afghan refugee newcomers (including 5,000 U.S. citizens) have been welcomed into the U.S. since the rollout of Operations Allies Welcome, a relief effort launched under the Biden administration to help Afghans displaced since the fall of Kabul to the Taliban. This effort has humanitarian roots; in parallel, it promises to be a significant boon to the U.S. economy at a time of critical workforce need.

For more information about Upwardly Global’s Afghan response efforts, please contact [rfishman@upwardlyglobal.org](mailto:rfishman@upwardlyglobal.org) or visit our [website](#).

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*Upwardly Global, the first and longest-serving organization dedicated to advancing the inclusion of immigrant and refugee professionals into the workforce in the U.S., has long been committed to this effort in support of Afghan refugees, having built out a new program incorporating our experience serving several hundred Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients over the past decade.*

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## Upwardly Global Supports Afghan Adjustment Act as Pathway to Strengthening Economic Development

September 7, 2022

Upwardly Global is pleased to endorse the [Afghan Adjustment Act \(AAA\)](#), which was introduced on August 9, 2022 with bipartisan support in both the Senate ([S.4787](#)) and House of Representatives ([H.R. 8685](#)).

An estimated 90,000 Afghan refugee newcomers (including 5,000 U.S. citizens) have been welcomed into the U.S. since the rollout of Operations Allies Welcome, a relief effort launched under the Biden administration to help Afghans displaced since the fall of Kabul to the Taliban. This effort has humanitarian roots; in parallel, it promises to be a significant boon to the U.S. economy at a time of critical workforce need.

Upwardly Global has been supporting thousands of Afghan professionals, and we know that their experience and skills can help us address “unprecedented” labor shortages across key industries.<sup>1</sup> Through the passage of the AAA, the U.S. will take an important step towards eliminating the immediate burden on the special immigrant visa (SIV) and asylum processes, whose backlogs and pending applications put over 1.4 million Afghans, a portion of whom are already employed in the U.S., at risk of losing their jobs or deportation.<sup>2</sup> The AAA is a chance to honor our commitment to our Afghan allies and ensure they and their families can remain safely in the U.S. Similar adjustment acts have been passed in the past following U.S. conflicts in Iraq, Cuba, and Vietnam.

Recently, Upwardly Global released new data, based on internal research and metrics from our Afghan response programming, that highlighted this economic potential of newly-arrived professionals in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> We estimate that over 10,000 Afghan refugees have English proficiency and a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Moreover, these individuals have been eager to find employment at their skill level, despite the setbacks caused by the trauma of displacement and resettlement. Provided that Afghan newcomer professionals are met with inclusive

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Chamber of Commerce. “U.S. Chamber’s Bradley: The Current Labor Shortage is ‘Unprecedented,’ Urges Solutions on Immigration, Childcare.” May 6, 2022.  
<https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/u-s-chambers-bradley-the-current-labor-shortage-is-unprecedented-urges-solutions-on-immigration-childcare> (Accessed August 31, 2022)

<sup>2</sup> Evacuate Our Allies Coalition. “Fact Sheet on the Afghan Adjustment Act.” August 31, 2022.  
<https://www.evacuateourallies.org/advocacy/afghan-adjustment-act> (Accessed August 31, 2022)

<sup>3</sup> Upwardly Global. “New Data From Upwardly Global Projects Afghan Newcomers to Contribute \$646M to U.S. Economy.” Press Release, Published on ReliefWeb. August 22, 2022.  
<https://reliefweb.int/report/united-states-america/new-data-upwardly-global-projects-afghan-newcomers-contribute-646m-us-economy> (Accessed August 31, 2022)

employment opportunities and access to skills-aligned roles, their projected economic contributions in the U.S. are estimated to total \$646 million per annum.<sup>4</sup>

Over the past year, Afghan refugee newcomers accessing Upwardly Global employment services were placed in jobs, on average, within 136 days after arriving in the U.S. To date, we have helped over 240 Afghan professionals secure full-time employment at their skill level, with a sum of annual salaries totaling over \$15 million.

Many of these newcomers have placed into high-demand industries, primarily information technology, engineering and architecture, and business logistics and operations (BLO).<sup>5</sup> Ahmad's story was highlighted in a [recent op-ed](#) in North Carolina, co-authored by Upwardly Global. There are hundreds of other poignant personal stories of recent newcomers, such as these individuals who risk losing their safety and jobs if we continue to wait to pass the AAA:

***Zainab** is an accomplished IT professional who took on a job as a supermarket cashier after arriving in the U.S. Her friend referred her to Upwardly Global, through which she received technical training and coaching that enabled her to land a professional job as an IT Technician making \$85,000 per year.*

***Maryam** is a young surgeon from Afghanistan who connected with Upwardly Global at the safe haven she was evacuated to. Since relicensing as a physician in the U.S. is a long and arduous path, Maryam worked with Upwardly Global to pursue opportunities in clinical research. Through Upwardly Global's partnership with NewYork-Presbyterian, Maryam recently started a full-time job as a data research coordinator.*

***Shahpur** was one of the first four Black Hawk helicopter pilots for the U.S. military in Afghanistan. A recipient of a letter of commendation by the late Senator John McCain, Shahpur went on to serve as a captain and squadron commander. With Upwardly Global's support, Shahpur landed his current job, working as a flight line technician in Arizona, and will be a strong candidate for a reskilling program for flight dispatchers. Shahpur's story was [featured](#) on CNBC's "The News with Shepard Smith" for the one-year anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.*

We believe that our Afghan allies deserve our protection and a path towards security, permanence, and citizenship in the U.S. Passing the AAA is our moral obligation and represents an investment in our diverse communities and workforce.

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<sup>4</sup> Upwardly Global. "New Data From Upwardly Global Projects Afghan Newcomers to Contribute \$646M to U.S. Economy." Press Release, Published on ReliefWeb. August 22, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/united-states-america/new-data-upwardly-global-projects-afghan-newcomers-contribute-646m-us-economy> Accessed (Accessed August 31, 2022)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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