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The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C. Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary of Homeland Security
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave S.E.
Washington, DC 20528

RE: Request for Case-by-Case Exemptions from Presidential Proclamation 10949 for Afghan Women Admitted to U.S. Institutions of Higher Education, Including Authorization to Participate in Optional Practical Training (OPT) on F-1 Student Visas

Dear Secretary Rubio and Secretary Mullin:

We write to request that the Department of State in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security exercise its discretionary authority under Presidential Proclamation 10949, issued June 4, 2025, to grant case-by-case exemptions for Afghan women who have been admitted for full-time study at accredited U.S. institutions of higher learning. These exemptions would permit the issuance of F-1 non-immigrant student visas and allow the beneficiaries to participate in Optional Practical Training (OPT) as authorized under existing regulations. Exemptions would serve compelling United States national interests in foreign policy, human rights, education and countering extremism.

As you know, Presidential Proclamation 10949 fully suspended the entry into the United States of nationals of Afghanistan as immigrants and non-immigrants, including those seeking F-1 student visas. However, the Presidential Proclamation recognizes that exceptions are appropriate in certain circumstances. Section 4(b) of the Presidential Proclamation enumerates specific categorical exceptions, while Section 4(d) expressly authorizes broader case-by-case exceptions.

We urge you to consider and approve F-1 visa applications from Afghan women who (1) have been admitted to accredited U.S. colleges or universities for full-time degree programs, (2) meet all standard F-1 visa eligibility requirements (including financial support, have an intent to depart from the United States after their temporary period of stay and have a foreign residence that they have no intention of abandoning) and comply with visa terms, and (3) present no independent security or public-safety concerns after appropriate vetting. Once vetted, the applicants should be permitted to apply for and engage in Optional Practical Training (OPT) under 8 C.F.R.

214.2(f)(10)(12), including post-completion OPT, as this is an integral component of the F-1 educational program and does not require separate entry authority beyond the underlying student visa exemption.

The United States has long supported educational opportunities for Afghan women as a humanitarian and strategic interest. Granting these exemptions would advance multiple core U.S. national interests including foreign policy and human rights, national security and counter-extremism, economic and educational benefits. In addition, the overstay concerns annotated in the Presidential Proclamation at a rate of 29.30% for Afghan F-1 student visa recipients could be mitigated by targeting exemptions for highly vetted women admitted to accredited institutions, coupled with Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) monitoring, university oversight and coordination with the Department of Homeland Security to provide ample safeguards. This targeted exemption request aligns with U.S. interests while fully respecting the national security framework of Presidential Proclamation 10949.

Thank you for your continued leadership and consideration of this request. We look forward to your response. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions or require additional information.

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