



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

207 STATE HOUSE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

JB PRITZKER
GOVERNOR

September 14, 2021

Re: Local capacity for resettling evacuees from Afghanistan

Dear Mayors, County Board and IL General Assembly Leaders,

Welcoming refugees is an important part of who we are in Illinois. We are a stronger State because of the value and vitality refugees bring to our communities and economies. Since 1975, the State of Illinois has welcomed and resettled more than 130,000 refugees from more than 86 countries. Today, we expect that approximately up to 3,000 evacuees from Afghanistan, from a total population of about 50,000 who are soon to enter the U.S., will come to Illinois. Many of these are individuals who worked alongside our own Military personnel and contractors and were integral to our efforts during the combat and rebuilding missions in Afghanistan. In rebuilding their lives, they need safe and welcoming communities to call home.

To that end my administration -- including the Illinois Departments of Human Services, Emergency Management, Public Health and Healthcare and Family Services -- are working together with refugee resettlement agencies to support a successful transition for the evacuees from Afghanistan who are expected to arrive in Illinois in the coming days and weeks. As part of that process, all refugees resettled in Illinois will undergo health screenings specific to public standards established by IDPH. All eligible refugees will also be offered access to one of the three Covid-19 vaccines available if they have not already received it upon initial entry into the country.

I write to you now to seek your partnership in this endeavor. Illinois-based refugee-serving organizations have formally committed to resettling approximately 830 of the expected 3,000 Afghan evacuees, so we need to help identify more capacity for resettlement statewide.

I am asking every Mayor, County board and IL GA leader to indicate local capacity you may have in your community for Afghan refugees who are seeking safe and welcoming communities in which to resettle.

I have asked the Office of Welcoming Centers for Refugee and Immigrant Assistance at the Illinois Department of Human Services to coordinate this effort. Please email Lilian Jimenez (Lilian.jimenez@illinois.gov), Associate Director for Welcoming Centers for Refugee and Immigrant Services with any information about your local capacity. If you have questions related to this effort, Ms. Jimenez can be reached at 312-793-2705.

For a list of immigrant serving organizations in our state, including 13 refugee resettlement agencies, visit www.DHS.Illinois.Gov/Welcome. Many of these organizations are accepting donations and volunteer time from those who want to support evacuees from Afghanistan.

As you know, refugees have successfully rebuilt their lives and made positive social and economic contributions to Illinois. This will continue well into our future. I am so grateful to all of the Illinois community leaders who have already offered assistance. My goal is to ensure that all localities can continue to participate and benefit from refugee resettlement. As the Governor of Illinois, I am committed to lead Illinois as a welcoming state for refugees and asylees. Thank you in advance for your support of your communities and for your leadership in this critical mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. B. P. A." with a stylized flourish at the end.