

An Open Letter to the Corporations Supporting H.R. 392:

We are writing on behalf of the National Iranian American Council, the largest grassroots Iranian-American organization in the United States advocating for peace and civil rights. We are deeply concerned regarding your lobbying efforts in support of the “Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act of 2017” (H.R. 392/S. 281). This legislation would remove a fundamental pillar of our immigration system and risk creating a monopoly over the green card process for nationals from one or two large countries. However unintentionally, your support for H.R. 392 would also exacerbate the impact of the Muslim Ban for Iranians and help advance Donald Trump's stated goal of a “shutdown” for Muslims entering the United States.

Minority and immigrant communities have been placed under great stress by President Trump's policies. Iranians find themselves barred from coming to the United States due to the Muslim Ban and those who are here are completely cut off from their families in Iran. Most of these individuals are unable to leave the country without surrendering their visas and never returning.

One of the few beacons of hope for Iranians is the high-skilled visa and green card process. Many in the Iranian-American community became citizens through employment-based green cards and went on to make great contributions to the country. Unfortunately, H.R. 392 would dramatically reshape that process by removing safeguards that ensure no one country's nationals can monopolize the green card process. This may reduce wait times for persons from large countries like India, but will make it all but impossible for individuals from small, impoverished, or banned countries to become green card holders.

We have been inundated by inquiries from individuals who are concerned that the bill would effectively force them to choose between staying in the United States to pursue the American Dream and being able to see their families. For individuals from smaller countries like Iran, the wait time for a green card will increase by years and potentially up to a decade for second and third preference categories. This will create tremendous vulnerabilities for individuals already subject to Trump's Muslim ban. Iranians who are already often restricted to single-entry visas will be kept in, while their families who are subjected to the Muslim Ban are kept out.

A great number of your impacted employees have received their higher education in the U.S., often on scholarships, and now want the chance to both contribute to the U.S. and improve their own lives. Unfortunately, the combination of the Muslim Ban and H.R. 392 would create a toxic immigration climate for them that places them in an impossible predicament. The reality is that many will understandably choose to prioritize the freedom to see their immediate family and will slowly leave the U.S. Their departure would not only end their own American dream but with them would go critical skills and research that not only benefits your companies but also the development of the entire country.

We implore you to resist the temptation to find a simple solution for a complex problem when it will leave behind employees and entire communities that have been impacted by the Muslim Ban. We are ready and willing to work with you to consider alternatives that keep the American dream and American values alive for everyone.