

Testimony of Somayeh Khiabani
Founding Member – California Director of
All Of Us
Supallofus.Org

FOR THE HEARING
Removing Barriers to Legal Migration
to Strengthen our Communities and Economy

United States Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and Border Safety
March 15, 2022

My name is Somayeh Khiabani. I am a founding member and the director of California outreach for All of Us, a grassroots organization with roughly 5,000 members who hope and expect that because of our skills, we will get green cards to live as legal permanent residents in the United States – and eventually, to become citizens of the greatest country in the world.

Our members are from more than 60 countries: Armenia, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Belarus, Canada, China, Columbia, Croatia, Cyprus, Philippines, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Iran, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Taiwan, and others.

We study at Stanford, Caltech, MIT, Rensselaer, University of Texas at Austin, Penn State, Cornell, University of Notre Dame, Carnegie Mellon, Clemson, Indiana University, Pitt, Cleveland Clinic, Johns Hopkins, Brandeis, Virginia Tech, Duke, LSU, the University of Illinois, West Virginia University and many others.

Our professional fields include medical and scientific research (chemistry, computer science, physics, neurology, climate change, marketing science, and artificial intelligence, among others).

Our work creates jobs and saves lives.

Yet we face an obstacle that only the Congress can clear: ***there are not enough green cards.***

We are making this statement for the record today to endorse three pieces of legislation: S. 2753, *America's Children Act*, the Protecting Children of Long-Term Visa Holders Act; the RELIEF Act, the Resolving Extended Limbo for Immigrant Employees and Families Act, which would eliminate the family and employment green card backlog by increasing the number of green cards available, and S.1024, the *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act*.

Each of these removes specific barriers to the legal immigration that America needs. We urge this Committee to work together to reach agreement and pass legislation that will make our immigration system work as it should.

I am typical of All of Us membership. I have a Ph.D. in engineering from Cornell. I am now a staff engineer at Qualcomm. My California colleagues include Maria Shutova, Jianxuan Xu, Sahar Daemi, Yang Song, Wen Zhao, Tingting Zhang, Dongling Wu, and Razieh Khajehyar.

Maria Shutova is originally from Russia. She now lives in Milpitas, California. She has a PhD in Physics from Texas A&M University. Her research is in optics and now, she works at KLA as a product development engineer.

Jianxuan Xu has a PhD degree in Computer science from University of South Florida. He is originally from China, now lives in Rancho Santa Fe, California. He is a research engineer at University of California San Diego. Their research team is working on data analysis to find treatments and solutions for Alzheimer's disease.

Sahar Daemi is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California Davis. Her current research focus is on inorganic material structures for photoelectrochemical water splitting.

Yang Song has a Master's degree in Computer science from University of California San Diego. He lives in San Diego, California and currently is staff engineer at Sempra Energy. He manages a team to create data models to control wind and solar panels to maximize energy generation production.

Wen Zhao, originally from Yangzhou, China, lives in Del mar, California. Wen holds a PhD degree in Biochemistry from UC San Diego, holds 12 patents for food additives and is now working as a senior scientist in Pfizer.

Tingting Zhang is originally from Chongqing, China. She lives in San Diego, California, holds a Master's degree in accounting and currently working as an audit manager in City of San Diego.

Dongling Wu is originally from Shanghai, China, now lives in Irvine, California, holds a PhD in biotechnology from UCSD and is currently working as a senior scientist in Emergent BioSolutions.

Razieh Khajehyar has a PhD in plant sciences from University of Idaho. She is a plant scientist and biotechnology research associate at Axbio in San Jose.

The problem is simple: there are not enough green cards. So the answer is more.

All of Us supports the RELIEF Act, the Resolving Extended Limbo for Immigrant Employees and Families Act, which would eliminate the family and employment green card backlog by increasing the number of green cards available. We applaud Senator Durbin for introducing this legislation, and subcommittee Chair Padilla and your colleagues for cosponsoring it.

We also strongly endorse S. 2753, the Protecting Children of Long-Term Visa Holders Act that subcommittee Chairman Padilla has introduced with the bipartisan support of many of his colleagues.

We urge Senators who agree on various parts of different pieces of legislation – preventing the aging out of backlogged children, exempting spouses and children from the totals, recapturing lost green cards, and so on – to work together.

We ask this Committee to be very clear: No one should have to wait 10+ years for a green card. The solution is not to make everybody wait longer.

It's just arithmetic: the only way to solve the backlogs is more green cards.

As CRS reported:

“This analysis projects that, by FY2030, the EB1 backlog would grow from an estimated 119,732 individuals to an estimated 268,246 individuals; the EB2 backlog, from 627,448 individuals to 1,471,360 individuals; and the EB3 backlog, from 168,317 individuals to 456,190 individuals. In sum, the total backlog for all three employment-based categories would increase from an estimated 915,497 individuals currently to an estimated 2,195,795 by FY2030.” [Page 15]

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46291>

So without more green cards, the backlog itself will more than double. What's now a 10 year wait for one source country will become a 17 year wait for all source countries. A system that now doesn't work for Indians (and some Chinese) won't work for anybody.

Surely this Committee believes it should work for America – for all of us.

This Committee should not neglect to study and share with your colleagues the economic boom that will result from emancipating backlogged workers: economist Sankar Mukhopadhyay and his colleague David Oxborrow asked a question which is too much neglected in studies that do not make the vital distinction between a new American and an H-1B tied to their employer. They calculated that each H-1B worker who finally gets their green card is worth +\$10,000 in economic growth.

There are more than half a million backlogged workers encumbered with indefinitely temporary status, whom the RELIEF Act would liberate with green cards over the next five years. When each gets their green card, they will take higher paying jobs, opening up good jobs, and many will start their own businesses and hire Americans.

That's a half-TRILLION dollars in economic growth.

Don't smother it with divisive, zero-sum politics.

We also urge this Committee to look down the road on what some call merit-based immigration issues.

Like the Titanic approaching the iceberg, the signs must not be ignored: one professional society surveyed its foreign graduate students and found that nearly 90% might simply leave the US and never return, if they were burdened with the delays that now afflict those born in India, and some from China.

<https://www.aps.org/policy/analysis/upload/Building-America-STEM-workforce.pdf>

Just consider the space program. Varmi Verma, chief engineer for robotic operations for the Perseverance rover now exploring Mars told the Wall Street Journal: "She reels off a list of colleagues' countries of origin: "Greece, Russia, India, Costa Rica, Cambodia, Mexico"—she pauses, then continues—"Argentina, France, Italy, the U.K., Colombia. It's almost every place I can think of."

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-american-dream-is-alive-on-mars-11614370446>

Green card backlogs seriously damage higher education, the space program, and America's technological lead in dozens of fields.

Critical health care professionals like nurses and doctors also urgently need a supply of green cards. There are so many ways to move forward – All of Us supports S.1024, the *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act*, introduced by Senator Durbin and cosponsored by Senator Cornyn.

Let's be blunt: without enough nurses and doctors in this pandemic, people will die.

So let's not move backward.

We organized a coalition for more green cards with immigrant-based organizations representing individuals from Canada to Nigeria, Greece to the Philippines, from all fields of study and professional development.

We published an Open Letter to other organizations involved with these issues : "Work with us, not against us... Unite with skilled people from all over the world who want the American immigration system to work better, for everybody."

This Committee has the power to do that. We urge this Committee to support the *America's Children Act*, to support the RELIEF Act, to support the *Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act*; to actually solve the problem.

America is not a zero-sum nation. We applaud this Committee's commitment to make immigration work -- for all of us.

Thank you for your consideration.

Attachment

**Sample quotes from letters by the
All of Us Ad Hoc Committee on Medical and Scientific Research**

Universities: MIT, Stanford, Rensselaer, University of Texas at Austin, Penn State, Cornell, University of Notre Dame, Carnegie Mellon, Clemson, Indiana University, Pitt, Cleveland Clinic, Johns Hopkins, Brandeis, Virginia Tech, Duke, LSU, the University of Illinois, West Virginia University and many others.

Fields: Medical and scientific research (chemistry, computer science, physics, neurology, climate change, marketing science, artificial intelligence).

“I am Rui Yan. I hold a Ph.D. degree in Computer Science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Currently, I am a data scientist at Microsoft.

The goal of my research work is to enable reasoning over streaming data in a more efficient way. Stream reasoning is more challenging than stream processing, as it requires to perform logical reasoning over the streaming data, which imposes much more computational complexity but still have to be finished within a fast time period just like how stream processing does. Generally, I solved this problem by introducing a novel conceptual model called “semantic importance” that is used to model the importance of the streaming data, empowering the stream reasoning system to smartly pick and keep important data for reasoning and query answering. My work helps pushing forward the boundary of stream information extraction and works as an efficient algorithm to analyze streaming data, ultimately helps improve the society, economy and people.

I am from China, there are many talented and high-educated foreign nationals in Microsoft just like me. Holding a Ph.D. degree in computer science from a top school doesn't mean I secure my green card. In fact, I didn't even win the H1B lottery 2 times in a row, because of the current H1B abuse situation. If you look at the data, you will easily get the point that the pending S386 doesn't help at all..."

"My name is Ali Abavisani. I hold an undergraduate degree and a master's degree in Electrical Engineering, and I hold a second master's degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering from Northeastern University, Boston, MA, and I am a PhD candidate in Electrical and Computer Engineering at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign... Our research lab is focused on addressing shortcomings of current hearing aid technology in order to devise a strategy for hearing aid amplification process, to enhance the speech perception for people with hearing loss... (with) scientists from Switzerland, Iran, and South Korea. "

"I am Jin Ikeda, born in Japan. I attained a Ph.D. degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Currently, I am a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Coastal Resiliency at Louisiana State University.... to accurately estimate climate change effects on future hurricane storm surges and compound flooding (flush and coastal flooding) in the Gulf of Mexico region. We have been developing the storm surge models and try to provide adequate tools to decision-makers to mitigate storm damages. Our work helps people."

"My name is Mario Jabra. I am 22 years old and a Lebanese citizen. I hold an undergraduate and Master's degree in Chemical Engineering and currently, I am in my 3rd year Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering at the Pennsylvania State University.

Our lab works along with Biopharmaceutical companies in order to study and optimize the production of therapeutics. We focus mainly on the production of monoclonal antibodies which is used for immunotherapies and DNA/RNA production and modification using CRISPR Cas9 which are

mainly used in gene therapy... Our lab includes scientists from Iran, Italy, Lebanon and Mexico.”

“I am I Huang. I hold an undergraduate degree in Computer Science and Information Engineering from National Taiwan University and a Master degree in Computer Science from Cornell University. Currently, I am a Software Engineer in Cloud Infrastructure team at Oracle, California.

In Oracle Cloud Infrastructure, my team is engaged in groundbreaking research designed network architecture for Public Cloud/On-Premise Cloud and also provide concrete networking service such as Fast Connect or Virtual Cloud Network or Load Balancing for enterprise customers in the world include some U.S Government ... Our team includes engineers from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Romania and U.S. ”

“I am Abolfazl Hashemi... a Graduate Research Assistant and a PhD candidate at the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin.

Our lab is engaged in designing novel methodologies for the next-generation of intelligent and data-driven systems with applications in bioinformatics, wireless communications, and connected autonomous cars. Our research is funded by grants from the National Science Foundation and other federal institutes. Our research further helps to creates jobs. America’s technological superiority includes producing knowledge in the engineering field, which is vital to continuing America’s economic growth. S. 386, still pending in the Senate, threatens the US superiority in many industries.

Our research group includes scientists from Iran, China, Columbia, and India.”

“I am Yun Wang. I got my master’s degree and PhD degree in Compute Science from Carnegie Mellon University. Currently, I am a research scientist at Facebook.

My research team is engaged in frontline research in artificial intelligence (AI) for audio and video understanding. We work on tasks such as speech recognition and event detection in videos. These technologies can enable machines to understand the content of multimedia content people share on the web, and improve the searching and recommendation of such content. For example, with these technologies, users will be able to search for a video they uploaded years ago when they first visited the Yellowstone National Park and saw a bison. They can also get videos recommended to them in which cats play with dogs. In a word, our research help people search for and digest multimedia information more easily and efficiently... America's technological superiority includes artificial intelligence, which is vital to our future. S. 386, still pending in the Senate, threatens American superiority in AI research.

My research team includes scientists from China, Vietnam, Armenia, Romania, and Germany. "

"My name is Atiye Ahmadireskety. I am an Analytical Chemist. Currently, I am working on my second Ph.D. (August 2017-onwards) at the Department of Chemistry, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL. Research in my group centers around applications of mass spectrometry as a powerful analytical tool in clinical, pharmacological, biotechnological, environmental, petrochemical, and forensic analysis... we are trying to find a way to evaluate and identify early EC [Endometrial Cancer] diagnosis and prognosis without the need for a biopsy. I have accumulated significant amount of experience and knowledge in my eight years of research carrier (which is continuing) to help people, especially women....Our lab includes scientists from Brazil, Canada, China, Iran, and the Netherlands."

"My name is Mozhgan Rahimi Boldaji and I hold a Ph.D. degree in Mechanical Engineering from Stony Brook University. Currently, I am a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Automotive Engineering at Clemson University.

I work on design and development of new generations of Internal Combustion (IC) engine that have higher efficiency and lower harmful pollutant emissions compared to conventional engines. My research work has an extremely broad impact..."

“I am Laya Shamgah and hold an undergraduate degree, a master’s degree, and a PhD in Electrical Engineering – control systems. ... My previous research, funded by Air Force Research Laboratory, has been toward development of algorithms for automatically, immediately, and correctly design paths for robots to win a battle in a highly dynamic adversarial environment. The project has been very successful that brought back several other research projects to the lab from TRMC, DoD, and other related organizations. We help US.

That is most important, but I feel I should add that it also creates jobs. America’s technological superiority includes robotics, which is vital to our economic future. S. 386, still pending in the Senate, threatens American superiority in robotics research.

Our lab includes scientists from all over the world, including Ethiopia, Iran, Bangladesh, and China. ..”

“I am Ali Pakzad. I hold an undergraduate degree in Mathematics, a master’s degree in MBA finance, and a Ph.D. degree in Mathematics from University of Pittsburgh. Currently, I am a Zorn postdoctoral fellow at Indiana University, Department of Mathematics.

I am a computational fluid dynamicist studying the accuracy of turbulence models using a combination of computation and modern applied mathematics. My research involves modeling hurricanes... damage of the 2017 Atlantic hurricane estimated to be \$300 billion (USD), with over 3,300 deaths. If the hurricane could be predicted more precisely, many of those 3,300 persons could be alive today.

...Our department includes mathematicians from Italy, France, Poland, Iran, Russia, Hong Kong and Armenia.”

“I am Nazmin Bithi. I hold an undergraduate degree in Pharmacy. Currently, I am a PhD student at the Department of Cardiovascular and Metabolic sciences at Cleveland Clinic.

Our lab is engaged in groundbreaking research designed to impact the course of diseases Glioblastoma (4th stage of human brain tumor), longevity associated diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's. We are currently involved in number of projects using dietary restriction mediated endogenous H₂S to increase the resistance of longevity associated neurodegenerative diseases and sensitivity against Glioblastoma cell proliferation. Our works will ultimately use to help patients and uncover to the novel way of longevity...

Our lab includes scientists from Bangladesh, Japan, China. "

"I am Ali Rashidi. I hold my medical doctor (M.D) degree from Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences and Currently, I am a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Radiology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Our lab is engaged in groundbreaking research designed to impact the techniques of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in patients. We are currently involved in a number of projects to improve the imaging quality of patients with a metal implant, which always was a problem of using MRI in these patients. In addition, other projects of our lab have defined with the focus of decreasing the time of MRI which would be a great help for people with claustrophobia and an important factor for the cost-effectiveness of MRI for companies who are using MRI machine....

Our lab includes scientists from Brazil and Iran. "

"My name is S.Ali Aghvami. I'm PhD Candidate in physics at Brandeis university. I'm research assistant at Fraden lab studying soft matter and biological Physics. In my National Science Foundation funded research, I study biomaterials such as biopolymers and DNA and in collaboration with DNA origami labs in Germany, we are developing self-assembling DNA origami capsids that assemble around cargo which can be used as drug delivery vesicles in cancer therapy methods.

Our lab is also involved in method development for biological research. In 2017, I developed a rapid method for fabrication of microfluidic chips with wide range of applications in academia and industry. Two Massachusetts based companies, CamMed, Luminova, have already

started working with the proposed method and I have been giving consultations to them for developing microfluidic chips for two medical devices. We recently got a \$250,000 PFI-TT award from National Science Foundation to partner with Industrial section and commercialize this microfluidic chip for use in pharma companies. We have a pending patent on this product and I've had the plan to continue the product development through my own startup, which does not seem like a clear path, if S386 is passed by Senate.

I'm part of Brandeis Material Research Science and Engineering MRSEC Bioinspired Materials, where physicists, biologists, biochemists and chemists from US, Japan, Iran, China, France, Turkey and other countries... ”

“I am Pouria Salehi Nowbandegani, a fourth-year Ph.D. student of mathematics at Vanderbilt University, Nashville TN. Prior to Vanderbilt, Prior to Vanderbilt, I got my masters degree from Georgia Southern University, Statesboro GA. Before that, I obtained dual major bachelor degrees in Pure Mathematics and Computer Science.

My primary research area is graph theory. Over the last decade, I have published more than 25 papers in top peer-reviewed journals and I have solved several problems which had stayed unsolved for many years. Graph theory is a field of mathematics which has several applications from chemistry and pharmacology to computer science, data science, and telecommunication in addition to its theoretical value. In general, graph theory forms the fundamentals of analysis of any big data. The United States has been the top country in all of these areas, for instance, the United States is the leading chemical industries, telecommunication technologies or pharmacology which make billions of dollars of GNP.

In our department, there are mathematicians from the United States, France, Iran, Australia, China, Nepal, Ukraine ...”

“My name is Armin Yeganeh... I am a graduate research assistant at Virginia Center for Housing Research and a Ph.D. student in Environmental Design and Planning at Virginia Tech. I have three master's degrees ...”

“My name is Aghil Abed Zadeh. I have received a Ph.D. degree in physics from Duke University. Currently, I am a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Neurobiology at Duke University School of Medicine.

In our lab, we use groundbreaking theoretical and computational models of brain systems to investigate how they process and learn information from their inputs. We investigate several brain mechanisms such as learning and memory in collaboration with various experimental groups. My project focuses on striatum in the midbrain which is central to several behaviors and its dysfunction is implicated in numerous diseases with major societal burden (i.e. Parkinson’s disease, Huntington’s disease, addiction, compulsion) and of great importance in United States...Our lab includes scientists from Italy, Iran, India and Ukraine.”

“My name is Sajad Modaresi. I received my Ph.D. in Operations management from the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University. I obtained my Master of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Pittsburgh and my Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering from Sharif University of Technology. Currently, I am an Assistant Professor of Operations at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). My research mainly focuses on data-driven approaches to decision-making under uncertainty. I use analytical modeling and statistical and machine-learning tools to provide insights into operational decision problems and design implementable solutions... sales from 3.8 million retailers within the United States surpassed \$2.6 trillion in 2016, with the industry employing nearly 29 million individuals that year. In addition to retail industry sales being projected to rise 3.4% on an annual basis, e-commerce sales are estimated to rise by 7 to 10% each year. Given that I conduct research in support of improved e-commerce retail services, including online personalization and return policies, it is evident that my work benefits U.S. economic interests... My department in the Kenan-Flagler Business School includes researchers and scholars from U.S., Iran, Turkey, China, Canada, and India. ”

“ I am Alireza Fali. I hold an undergraduate degree in Optics and Laser Engineering, and my master’s degree in Photonics, and currently I am a fourth year Ph.D. student at University of Georgia.... Our lab is engaged in

groundbreaking research in Nano optics science. We are currently involved in a number of projects studying interaction of light and matter in nano scale which we are publishing in very high prestigious journals such as nature publications. My research is supported by NSF and Airforce funding and it opens the development of new nanotechnologies using new materials. By modifying materials such as black phosphorus, or by changing the metasurface structures of various materials, it allows for the creation of more reliable solar panels and data transmission hardware. These advanced technologies reduce reliance on fossil fuels and establish the infrastructure for quantum computing... Our lab includes scientists from Bangladesh, Iran, and Nepal.”