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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
March 10, 2022

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**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

**Jersey City Reunites Afghan Victims of the Taliban**

*Setting National Precedent for Helping Immigrants Navigate Federal Systems with Critical Support and Services*

**JERSEY CITY - Mayor Steven M. Fulop** met with eight members of the Kakar family who recently escaped Afghanistan and reunited with their immediate relative and Jersey City resident, Seema Kakar.

Jersey City is able to offer life-saving immigration services because it is the only municipality in the US with federal accreditation from the Department of Justice and a Civil Surgeon doctor on staff. Similar help is being provided to Ukrainian residents with families fleeing the Russian military invasion as well as other residents from Haiti and various parts of Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

“Our Division of Immigrant Affairs prepared over 1,000 pages of federal petitions for the Kakar family and others,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “This is how Jersey City is changing the immigration narrative, by providing services that welcome immigrants to strengthen our City and our nation.”

Mayor Fulop [supports](#) the **Afghan Adjustment Act**, which would create an orderly and expedient way for evacuees, like the Kakars, to obtain lawful permanent residence and eventually become citizens. The



Mayor also calls for similar federal measures for Haitian and Ukrainian victims of crises, and [celebrates](#) last Friday’s designation of **Temporary Protected Status for Ukrainians**.

Seema Kakar is a single woman asylee living in Jersey City who first depended on the **Department of Health and Human Services’ Immigrant Affairs Division** for her Green Card application and Civil Surgeon medical exam. Within the petitions

for her family were letters from the Taliban threatening beheadings as punishment for Seema’s high school and university studies in the United States.

“The 1,000-page parole applications we submitted with significant help from the City’s Division of Immigrant Affairs allowed for my entire family to escape the Taliban violence, except for my brother who was injured by Taliban and remains hospitalized,” said **Seema Kakar**. “Now that the worst is over, we hope to get my family asylum and jobs. They each have high-level degrees that we hope they can utilize in the community here.”

“By closing the gap in immigration services, the Kakars and other immigrants become allies for broader public health goals,” notes **HHS Director Stacey Lea Flanagan**. “Green Card and citizenship programs, and this unique case of family reunification, engage and empower the immigrant communities that make up nearly half Jersey City.”



As humanitarian parolees, the Kakar family may stay in the US for two years, during which time they are seeking attorneys to help with their asylum petitions and jobs. Nearly all hold advanced degrees—in medicine, nursing, business—with the exception of Zaland, who was born just two weeks before the evacuation of Kabul.

“Jersey City continues to set a national precedent for helping immigrants navigate the corridors of the federal immigration system, which can often be a lengthy and confusing process,” said **Mike Mclean, Director of Jersey City’s Division of Immigrant Affairs**. “That’s why we’ve worked diligently to get these services to the immigrants who really need help for fear they will never see their loved ones again.”

In 2020, the City became the first municipality in the nation accredited for offering free legal services to immigrants as part of the U.S. Department of Justice Recognition and Accreditation Program. This was achieved just two years after Mayor Fulop and the City Council created the Division of Immigrant Affairs, the newest addition to the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Kakar family is only one of hundreds helped by resettlement agencies like **Church World Service**, whose Jersey City office is seeing record numbers of newcomers. Seema lives in a local group home where the **Sisters of Saint Joseph of Peace** have sheltered vulnerable immigrant women since 1885. Her family reunification petitions were made possible by an individual benefactor who signed Affidavits of Support required by strict federal protocols.

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