



June 7, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader  
Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The SBC is the nation's largest protestant denomination with roughly 46,000 congregations and 14 million members.

I am writing to you today to ask for the inclusion of Priority 2 refugee status for Uyghurs and Hong Kongers in the Bipartisan Innovation Act. As you know, the U.S. government has made an official determination that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is committing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, China, for targeting Uyghur Muslims and



members of other ethnic and religious minority groups. Since 2017, the CCP has waged a systemic campaign of oppression and persecution against Uyghur Muslims through totalitarian tactics like pervasive surveillance, thought control, ideological reeducation, forced birth control, and compulsory labor. China has constructed upward of 1,000 internment camps for this purpose, and it's estimated that 1-3 million Uyghur Muslims are detained in these facilities. Aside from political indoctrination, physical and psychological abuse is commonplace throughout these camps, including rape, torture, malnourishment, and forced organ harvesting. Recently, [new photos and leaked files](#) have further evidenced these atrocities.

Additionally, since the CCP's passage of the National Security law, China now has the power to use the same "security" practices used in mainland China to punish and suppress dissent and unrest. This law puts political dissenters and people of faith in Hong Kong in danger and at risk of life in prison and perhaps extradition to the mainland.

Priority 2 refugee status is for groups of special humanitarian concern to the United States, who are designated by the U.S. government for resettlement processing. It is an important tool that provides the vulnerable direct access to the U.S. refugee system. Uyghurs and Hong Kongers are deserving of and in desperate need of this designation, and providing Priority 2 status to these groups has broad, bipartisan support.

If the United States wants to be serious in its efforts to counter China through this package, an essential component of that must be countering China morally. As Southern Baptists, we affirm that Scripture calls for and expects God's people to minister to the sojourner. God's love for the immigrant, refugee, and foreigner is a consistent biblical theme, and he calls his



THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS  
LIBERTY COMMISSION  
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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people to do the same. Jesus Christ himself, the greatest example of love, implores us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, regardless of race, nationality, religion, or status.

The U.S. has a long and proud history of welcoming refugees fleeing persecution, and we must not return Uyghurs and Hong Kongers to horrific situations of oppression. By offering Priority 2 refugee status, our nation can demonstrate that this country is a safe haven for the persecuted and those whose human rights have been abused and whose religious freedom has been violated.

Respectfully,

Brent Leatherwood

Acting President

Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission