



AMERICAN
IMMIGRATION
LAWYERS
ASSOCIATION

AMERICA'S
VOICE

Human
Rights
First

IMMIGRATION HUB

NATIONAL
IMMIGRANT
JUSTICE CENTER
A HEARTLAND ALLIANCE PROGRAM



MEMORANDUM

TO Interested Parties

FROM American Immigration Council, American Immigration Lawyers Association, America's Voice, Human Rights First, Immigration Hub, National Immigrant Justice Center, National Immigration Law Center, SEIU

DATE Tuesday, November 7, 2023

RE Strategic, Humane Policy Demands for Border Management

Funding for Immigration Action Should Prioritize Common-sense Action to Support Cities and States, Fund Border Management, Ensure Fair and More Efficient Asylum Process

Overview

As Congress negotiates an emergency supplemental funding bill, some Members of Congress are misusing these negotiations in order to extract cruel, ineffective and radical changes to our immigration and asylum system.

Congress should advance bipartisan solutions to provide smart resources at the border that make the existing process work better while keeping communities safe. Congress should increase funding to improve asylum processing, reduce backlogs and work permit waiting times, resource states, localities and community shelter and support services, and access to legal counsel.

We all share a commitment to ensuring that our communities thrive and that those who need protection can find it here in the United States. **A smart funding package would better fund the system and ensure humane treatment for asylum applicants and would not permanently block access to safety for all who need refuge.**

Key Demands:

→ Invest in Frontline Efforts to Effectively Address Migrant Needs

- **Funding Customs and Border Protection's Office of Field Operations** to ensure they can safely and effectively screen migrants and people seeking asylum at ports of entry in a streamlined way that reduces the backlog at the border.
- **Improve Funding for Legal Representation.** A right to representation is foundational to this nation, but the majority of migrants don't have access to lawyers.
- **Invest in Case Management Pilot Program** to strengthen support for immigrants undergoing asylum and other case adjudication as a more effective and cost-efficient alternative to detention.
- **Strengthen Services for Unaccompanied Children** to improve the processes for humanely and effectively taking care of children who arrive alone to the U.S.
- **Increase Funding for USCIS** to streamline the process of employment authorization to strengthen our workforce. By resourcing USCIS capacity to process applicants for legal immigration approvals in a timely and efficient manner, we can incentivize legal pathways for those who qualify and disincentivize irregular border crossings for those who don't.

→ **Provide Sufficient Resources to States, Localities, and Non-Governmental Organizations to Meet the Moment, and Improve Coordination Between Them and the Federal Government**

- **Develop Coordinated Communications and Planning Best Practices** for cities, localities, and non-governmental organizations to follow as migrants arrive in our communities.
- **Fund Shelter and Services Program for cities, localities and non-governmental organizations assisting newly arrived migrants.** These funds provide critical resources, including food, clothing, basic medical aid, legal information, and transportation support for people recently released from Department of Homeland Security custody.
- **Support Regional Migration Solutions in the Americas** including by partnering with the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, and the International Organization for Migration with funds needed for stabilization, regularization programs, migration pathways, and integration initiatives.

→ **Oppose Permanent Policy Changes That Harm Asylum Seekers and Use Them As Ransom for Measures Such As Aid for Ukraine or Avoiding a Government Shutdown.**

- **The System Needs More Resources Now and Comprehensive Reform Over Time.** But Congress should steer clear of last minute, poorly thought-out policy changes in 11th hour budget negotiations that would make a poorly functioning system worse.
- **Keep Ineffective Policies Out:** Increased detention of asylum seekers and immigrants, family separation, impossible standards for accessing asylum protection, and other harmful policy changes should not be part of a foreign assistance package or a stop gap measure to keep the government open for the American people.
- **Keep Cruel Policies Out:** Congress should not increase funding for detention centers, more Border Patrol agents or other harmful items, or fund third country repatriation flights.