

February 5, 2019

Dear U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives Leadership, and members of the Department of Homeland Security appropriations conference committee,

We write as faith leaders representing national faith-based organizations and religions to urge you to pursue the faithful way forward with ongoing appropriations negotiations. We are grateful Congress ended the partial shutdown, which had, and continues to have serious, lasting consequences for millions of individuals and families, especially those facing poverty and food insecurity.

As faith leaders, we urge you to avert another shutdown and implement responsible spending practices for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) before February 15.

We 30 faith leaders are calling on you to:

- 1) Prevent increases to and ultimately reduce funding for deportations, detention, or border militarization and barrier construction within the Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs & Border Protection (CBP) budgets. This money should be invested in accounts that protect human dignity.
- 2) Prohibit ICE & CBP from overspending appropriations or repurposing other agencies' funding for detention, border wall construction, or expanded immigration enforcement.
- 3) Ensure that the conference process is not used as a vehicle to implement harmful changes to our immigration system or further curtail access to asylum or child protections.

DHS does not need any more money for immigration and border enforcement. In less than fifteen years, the ICE budget has nearly doubled and the CBP budget has nearly tripled. These spending increases have happened in the absence of meaningful policy reforms that would keep families together, ensure the protection of vulnerable people, and align our immigration system with our values. As conferees consider DHS spending, we urge you to free up funds currently allocated to unjust and immoral enforcement practices. Rather invest those funds in community-based alternatives to detention, legal services, and addressing the root causes of migration, such as poverty and violence in the Northern Triangle.

Congress should significantly rein in ICE & CBP's resources and increase oversight and accountability.

In the past two years alone, ICE has increased the number of beds in immigrant detention by 40%, expanding that capacity even amid the shutdown. ICE is keeping an historic 48,000 immigrants behind bars, nearly 8,000 more people than Congress allocated in the FY18 omnibus. This is simply unjust, financially irresponsible, and morally wrong. We urge conferees to put into place mechanisms that would stop ICE and CBP from overspending their annual appropriations for punitive enforcement at odds with our faith values.

Thoughtful and substantive immigration reform should be separate from the current three-week DHS appropriations negotiations. We are acutely aware of the meaningful, substantial policy reforms that

are required to remedy the underlying pain faced by families and individuals at the mercy of a broken and punitive immigration system. These questions, however, should not be the focus of this conference. They should be thoughtfully considered by the committees of jurisdiction who are aware of the complexities of law so that Congress does not inflict unintended harm on vulnerable communities - be they Dreamers, federal workers, recipients of government assistance, border residents, asylum seekers, or other beloved children of God.

Lapses in government spending are not just symbolic or rhetorical. The real-world consequences of congressional inaction and obfuscation are catastrophic for vulnerable communities. We urge congressional leadership and conferees to use this opportunity to change the direction of spending, to take back authority over congressional appropriations power, and to engage in good faith discussions that result in a spending bill that reduces funding for ICE and CBP.

Finally, as faith leaders, we reject any unilateral action to declare a national emergency or otherwise unconstitutionally circumvent the congressional appropriations authority.

In Faith,

Rev. Paula Clayton Dempsey, Director of
Partnership Relations
Alliance of Baptists

Brigid Lawlor
**Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the
Good Shepherd, US Provinces**

Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director
American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Rev. Ebony Grison
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative

Rev. David Beckmann, President
Bread for the World

Sister Margaret Magee, OSF, President
Franciscan Action Network

Michelle Warren, Advocacy & Strategic
Engagement Director
Christian Community Development Association

Lisa Sharon Harper, President and Founder
Freedom Road, LLC

Steve Timmermans, Executive Director
Christian Reformed Church in North America

Diane Randall, Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Rev. John L. McCullough, President & CEO
Church World Service

Carol Zinn, SSJ, Executive Director
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Scott Wright, Director
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

J Ron Byler, Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Eli McCarthy, PhD, Director of Justice and Peace
Conference of Superiors of Men

The Reverend Jacqueline J. Lewis, PhD
Middle Collegiate Church

Lawrence Couch, Director
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

Nancy K. Kaufman, CEO
National Council of Jewish Women

Rob Rutland-Brown, Executive Director
National Justice for Our Neighbors

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Sister Patricia Chappell, Executive Director
Pax Christi USA

Teri Hadro, BVM, President
Sisters of Charity, BVM

Sister JoAnn Persch, RSM, Justice Coordinator
Sisters of Mercy Chicago Justice Committee

Sister Aine O'Connor, RSM, Councilor
Leadership Team Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Valarie Kaur, Founder
The Revolutionary Love Project

Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society

Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, President
Unitarian Universalist Association

Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, President and CEO
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

John Dorhauer General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

Recipients:

Majority Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McCarthy
Senators Shelby, Capito, Hoeven, Blunt, Leahy, Durbin, and Tester
Representatives Lowey, Roybal-Allard, Price, Lee, Cuellar, Aguilar, Granger, Fleischmann, Graves, and Palazzo

Direct Quotes from Signatories

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice: "We need strong moral leadership from the House-Senate Conference Committee. The government must remain open, and Congress shouldn't waste a penny of taxpayer money on President Trump's worthless wall. The Conference Committee must focus on fully funding the government and demilitarizing border communities. Community engagement, not fear-based isolation, is the faithful way forward."

Diane Randall, Executive Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation: "America's history is defined by generations of people seeking freedoms and safe haven. It is a legacy to be proud of, protect, and pursue. Expanding border walls and detention centers as well as further militarizing our borders diminishes our freedoms and the essence of who we are as a nation. Turning our backs on the world will

not save our nation; it will erode the very values that built it.”

Lisa Sharon Harper, President and Founder, Freedom Road, LLC: “Budgets are, indeed, moral documents. They show us what and who we value. We urge you to craft a budget that lifts high the American ideal that we are all created equal endowed by our Creator with inherent dignity; worthy of equal protection of the law.”

The Reverend Jacqueline J. Lewis, PhD, Middle Collegiate Church: “As a clergywoman and activist, I reject any unilateral action to declare a national emergency or otherwise unconstitutionally circumvent the congressional appropriations authority.”

Valarie Kaur, The Revolutionary Love Project: “As a Sikh, an American, and a lawyer, I am alarmed by reports of ICE force-feeding Sikhs and other detainees on hunger strikes. A person should not have to compromise their life to protest their indefinite detention. I call on Congress to refuse to fund detentions, border walls, and militarization not only as a political necessity but as a moral imperative.”

Carol Zinn, SSJ, Executive Director, Leadership Conference of Women Religious: “The United States has a long history of welcoming migrants and women religious have been blessed to be able to accompany them. We urge conferees to reach a compromise that respects the dignity and rights immigrants and the communities that welcome them.”

Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary of The General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church: “As stated in its official resolution titled “Welcoming the Migrant to the U.S.,” The United Methodist Church stands in clear opposition to the building of a wall between the United States and Mexico. Communities on both sides of the border oppose a wall, which would disrupt and destroy many homes and sites, including an antebellum Methodist Church which was a haven on the Underground Railroad. The United Methodist Church calls for immigration policy to be rooted in migrant welfare, moral hospitality, and human rights. We call on Congress to embrace this vision and oppose a border wall, any funding increases for ICE or CBP, and any efforts to further militarize the border.”

Rev. John L. McCullough, President & CEO, Church World Service: “Our message is clear: Congress has an obligation to fix this moral emergency. In the past year, we have seen families torn apart at the border, children dying in CBP custody, teargas being fired at families, and the administration violating our own laws by slamming the door on vulnerable people seeking protection. The abuses have been egregious, and in the case of 5-year-old Jakelin Caal Maquin and 8-year-old Felipe Alonzo-Gomez, the results have been deadly. As communities of faith and conscience, we strongly oppose these abuses and any increases for the detention, deportation, and militarization of our immigrant and border communities.”

Rev. Paula Clayton Dempsey, Director of Partnership Relations, Alliance of Baptists: “People of faith speak in unequivocal defense of the most vulnerable of our neighbors calling on Congress to acknowledge our nation's complicity in the causes of human migration, and committing that we will not

remain silent until we as a nation have embraced immigration reform that defends, protects and honors the rights and humanity of all people.”

Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, President, Unitarian Universalist Association: “The choice before us is between a culture of scarcity and fear and a culture of abundance and love. Not one more cent should be appropriated to ICE or border patrol for the enforcement of unjust and immoral immigration policies. Rather we need to invest in community-based services for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and create policies based on welcome and inclusion so that all can thrive and participate in our society.”

J Ron Byler, Executive Director, Mennonite Central Committee U.S.: “When we reject immigrants, we ignore the numerous contributions newcomers make to our communities, our economy and our society. By building walls and turning away refugees and asylum seekers we disregard the Biblical call to care for those in need, to love the stranger among us as we love ourselves and to remember that we were once strangers, too.”

Teri Hadro, BVM, President, Sisters of Charity, BVM: “I and my congregation urge our Congress to seriously address comprehensive immigration reform by developing new policies and practices which are based on respect for the human lives at stake and which seek to lessen the dire violence and poverty which underlies migration from Central America.”

Margaret Magee OSF President, Franciscan Action Network: “As president of Franciscan Action Network, a faith organization of 53 institutional members and over 12, 000 individual members, I urge you not to permit another harmful government shutdown. Also, oppose a call for a national emergency, and prevent increases in funding for further anti-immigrant measures.”

Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, President and CEO, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee: “The militarization of our border is driving families, communities, and our nation apart—creating an actual crisis as its proponents use fear-mongering to defend massive spending increases for detention, deportation, and ineffective, unnecessary barriers. As faith leaders we are deeply concerned about additional funding for this invented crisis that would harm our communities by curtailing access to asylum and using immoral and futile tactics like detention and family separation as a deterrent. Thoughtful, deliberative work to improve our immigration system will take far more than a few weeks and can never be advanced on the backs of federal workers and their families.”

Sister Margaret Magee, OSF, President, Franciscan Action Network: “As President of Franciscan Action Network, I urge you not to permit another harmful government shutdown or a National Emergency and to prevent increases in funding for further anti-immigrant measures.”

Lawrence Couch, Director, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd: “As a nation, we have more humane ways of addressing the immigration issue that does not involve unnecessary barriers, detention, and forcibly separating families. These alternatives are not only more humane, they are also a lot more economical.”

Sister JoAnn Persch, RSM, Justice Coordinator, Sisters of Mercy Chicago Justice Committee: “As a person of faith I believe that every man and woman is a child of God and deserving of treatment with dignity and respect. As one who is directly in contact with detained immigrants for the last 10 years I know the inhumanity of the system and know detention is not necessary.”