

NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER (NAC) PRIORITIES AND NAC SIGN-ONS BY U.S. PROVINCE LEADERS: March 023

Prepared by Brigid Lawlor, RGS and Fran Eskin Royer

The NAC Focus Areas for 2023 are taken from the 2022 NAC Survey. Our primary constituents, Sisters and Lay Partners-in-Mission participated. The issues recommended are: Human Trafficking, Immigration, Poverty/Economics, Family including Mental Health and Violence and U.S. policies that affect the Good Shepherd mission worldwide. These issues also address root causes. They include but are not limited to: Covid-19, environmental degradation, and racism. These areas will be noted at the end of the issue description. We also address significant current issues which indirectly impact the other focus areas.

SIGN ONS:

NAC FOCUS AREA: Human Trafficking

ISSUE: FORCED AND CHILD MARRIAGE, AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING, IN AFGHANISTAN

Content: letter to Ambassador Cindy Dyer (Ambassador-at-Large, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons) calling for the immediate and urgent attention to a life-threatening and growing problem: forced and child marriage, and sexual slavery, in Afghanistan.

Taliban fighters visit homes, universities, and even orphanages in search of vulnerable families with girls and widows. Senior Taliban officials take extra wives as war prizes, and other loyalists are rewarded with young women who no longer can go to school or dream of economic independence. Feeling they have no escape; girls are committing suicide at alarming rates. One former medical student shared she was even prohibited from that, stating, “I don’t want to be taken away, I want to become a doctor in the future. If I commit suicide, they will destroy my family.”

The letter requests a meeting with Ambassador Dyer to explore pathways to safety and security and effective ways to combat human trafficking in Afghanistan.

Sent to: Ambassador Cindy Dyer (Ambassador-at-Large, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons)

Sponsored by: Future Without Voices

NAC FOCUS AREA: Immigration

ISSUE: EXTENSION LETTER TO 30 DAYS COMMENT PERIOD ON ASYLUM BAN

Content: The Biden administration published a Notice of Proposed Rule Making that recycles prior Trump-era bans on asylum. In addition to the significant alarm this rule raises on substance, it is really concerning that this rule *only offers 30 days* to comment on such sweeping changes to asylum processing. The letter addresses this concern and requests a 60-day response.

Sent to: Merrick Garland Attorney General, Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary – Homeland Security and Daniel Delgado, Acting Director, Border and Immigration Policy, Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans, David Neal, Director, David Neal, Director, Executive Office for Immigration Review and Lauren Alder Reid, Assistant Director, Ur Jaddou, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and, Richard Revesz, Administrator, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs and Office of Management and Budget – Exec. Office of the President.

Sponsored by: National Immigration Justice Center

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ISSUE: NO TO FAMILY DETENTION

Content: The sign-on letter expresses grave concerns over reports that the Biden administration is considering reviving the practice of family detention. We ask President Biden follow through on his campaign promises to end family detention and pursue humane immigration policies.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: Detention Watch Network

ISSUE: IMMIGRATION APPLICATIONS FOR RECENT EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS IN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA 1 SIGN ON TALLY MARCH 2023

Content: Letter on behalf of hundreds of American citizens who have pending family-based petitions with the DHS's United States Citizenship and Immigration Services and immigrant visa applications with the Department of State for immediate and close relatives impacted by the recent earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. The earthquake that struck both countries last month has created a once-in-a-century humanitarian crisis, and we urge both your departments to work jointly to take immediate action to expedite the review of these applications and petitions.

Sent to: Secretary Mayokas and Secretary Blinken

Sponsored by: Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

ISSUE: FAMILY DETENTION

Content: On March 07, 2023, the New York Times reported that the Biden Administration is planning to “turn to increasingly restrictive measures as his administration prepares for the end of Title 42” and is now considering bringing back detaining entire families in ICE detention centers as they seek asylum at the U.S./Mexico border. Detaining children and their parents is a cruel and unnecessary approach, especially after escaping precarious conditions often void of dignity. The letter urges the administration to not detain families who seek safety and security in the U.S.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: Interfaith Immigration Coalition

ISSUE: MARYLAND ACCESS TO CARE ACT (SB365/HB588).

Content: The bill as it stands now accomplishes the following: 1) immigrant families in Maryland Health Benefits Exchange are able to buy into the marketplace regardless of immigration status 2) requires MHBE to submit a federal waiver to expand this eligibility and 3) ensures there is a plan to allocate subsidies to immigrant families. That means we met the crossover deadline and now need to focus our efforts on the Senate and getting appropriate funding for the subsidies.

Sent to: Maryland State Senate Finance Committee and House Health and government Operations Committee

Sponsored by: Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

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NAC FOCUS AREA: Poverty/Economics

ISSUE: INCREASES IN LABOR-HHS-EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY 2024

Content: Letter to lead appropriators in Congress seeks an adequate share of funding for Labor-Health and Human Services-Education appropriations in FY 2024. This is a critical decision period in which House and Senate appropriators and Congressional leadership must decide on funding for appropriations overall and how it will be divided among the 12 appropriations subcommittees. The Labor-HHS-Education subcommittee covers funding for health care, research, and public health protections, substance use and mental health disorder prevention and treatment, job training, protections for workers, child care, Head Start, and other children's services, assistance for seniors and people with disabilities, education from pre-k through college, help for immigrants, heating and cooling assistance, anti-poverty programs, and much more. Many of these programs have lost ground for years; the letter gives examples and calls for funding adequate to meet today's needs.

Sent to: Chair Murray, Chair Granger, Vice Chair Collins, and Ranking Member DeLauro

Sponsored by: Coalition on Human Needs

ISSUE: BUDGET DEBT CEILING

Content: Letter asking for members of Congress to protect critical programs including food, healthcare and housing

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Washington Interfaith Staff Community (WISC)

ISSUE: FUNDING FOR WIC (WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN)

Content The sign-on letter calls for \$6.35 billion in WIC funding to cover WIC caseload, fund set-aside priorities for technology infrastructure and breastfeeding, sustain the fruit and vegetable bump through fiscal year 2024, and exclude riders that would disrupt implementation of the WIC food package rule.

Sent to: Chair Granger, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Murray, and Vice Chair Collins with cc to: Honorable: Harris, Bishops, Heinrich and Hoever

Sponsored by: National WIC Association

ISSUE: LABOR-HHS-EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY 2024

Content: The sign on is a group letter seeking increases in appropriations for 2024. The Labor-HHS-Education subcommittee covers funding for health care, research, and public health protections, substance use and mental health disorder prevention and treatment, job training, protections for workers, child care, Head Start, and other children's services, assistance for seniors and people with disabilities, education from pre-k through college, help for immigrants, heating and cooling assistance, anti-poverty programs, and much more.

Sent to: Lead Appropriations Committees in Congress

Sponsored by: Coalition on Human Needs

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ISSUE: MEDICAID UNWINDING

Content: Letter to Secretary Becerra addressing the Medicaid unwinding, which threatens to cause the greatest loss of Medicaid coverage in American history, disproportionately harming people of color and children. The letter urges HHS to make the strongest possible use of the legal authority recently granted by Congress to prevent state Medicaid programs from needlessly terminating health care for millions of eligible people.

Sent to: Secretary Becerra, Department of Health and Human Services

Sponsored by: Coalition on Human Need

NAC FOCUS AREA: Family including Mental Health and Violence

ISSUE: SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Content: Support for letter from survivor advocacy organizations to President Biden, the White House, and the Department of Education strongly urging them to finalize their proposed Title IX rules by May 2023.

Sent to: President Biden and the Department of Education

Sponsored by: National Alliance to End Sexual Violence

ISSUE: GUN VIOLENCE

Content: Letter asks the Appropriations Committees to provide at least \$468 million for Community Violence Intervention (CVI) initiatives in your FY 2024 legislation, of which \$200 million would fund the Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI) and \$268 million would fund the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Community and Youth Violence Prevention Program.

Gun violence rates continue to soar across the nation, with nearly 49,000 people dying from gunshot injuries in 2021, marking the highest single-year number of gun deaths to be recorded in our nation.

Sent to: Chairs Shaheen and Baldwin, and Ranking Members Moran and Capito,

Sponsored by: Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence

NAC FOCUS AREA: U.S. Policies That Affect Good Shepherd Mission Worldwide

ISSUE: SUPPORT FUNDING FOR THE MRNA (Moderna) HUB

Content: Letter asking President Biden to expand U.S. support for the MRNA initiative which provides financing for the vital work of enhancing global pandemic preparedness and response capabilities by providing a contribution of \$100 million. The letter is written in conjunction with the South African Consortium.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare vulnerabilities in the world pandemic preparedness and response architecture. Time and again countries with greater control over vaccine manufacturing and supply used that power to prioritize securing vaccines for their residents, often building a vaccine surplus, **while billions of people in poorer countries went without. More than 13 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered globally, yet more than two-thirds of people in low-income countries have not received a single dose.** Vaccine inequity has cost millions of lives, damaged the global economy, and increased the risk of new variants.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: WISC - working groups and Intertrade Groups

ISSUE: GLOBAL CRISIS RELIEF WITH THE IMF

Content: In October of last year, NAC joined nearly 150 civil society organizations from around the world called on the International Monetary Fund to release a new issuance of at least \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights to provide cost-free, debt-free, condition-free crisis relief for developing nations.

In advance of the coming Spring IMF meetings, and in the face of a potential global recession, we're preparing to reiterate this demand — this time directing our call to President Biden.

The demands remain the same as the last letter with a slight difference. In this case, the letter as concise as possible, with a clear focus on the benefits to the United States.

Sent to: President Biden

Sponsored by: Center for Economic and Policy Research

ISSUE: INVESTMENT POLICY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Content: The letter addresses root causes of migration. It notes the administration's investment strategy in Central America and the related human rights, corruption and economic development concerns.

Sent to: President Biden and Vice-President Harris,

Sponsored by: Latin American Working Group

NAC FOCUS AREA: Other Related Areas/Current Events

ISSUE: LAW ENFORCEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY DATABASE

Content: On May 25th, Biden signed an Executive Order which mandates that, within 240 days of its signing, the Attorney General establishes a National Law Enforcement Accountability Database as "a centralized repository of official records documenting instances of law enforcement officer misconduct." It's now been 282 days, there is no public database, and the AG has not issued a statement about its status. The letter discusses the need for transparency.

Sent to: Attorney General Merrick Garland

Sponsored by: Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington

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ISSUE: END SOLITARY CONFINEMENT ACT

Content: Congresswoman Cori Bush will be introducing a new piece of federal legislation, the End Solitary Confinement Act. Drawing from the best policy components from across the country regarding youth facilities, mental health facilities, and adult corrections facilities, this bill would: a) end solitary confinement in federal prisons, jails, and detention other than for up to at most four hours for emergency de-escalation; b) require all people in custody, including in alternative units, to otherwise have access to at least 14 hours of daily meaningful group out-of-cell time, including access to at least 7 hours of daily group programming; c) enhance due process protections, such as access to representation and use of neutral decision-makers; d) create oversight and enforcement mechanisms, including mandatory reporting, a private cause of action, oversight by an ombudsperson and community body, and greater media access; and e) incentivize states and localities to adopt similar bans on solitary confinement.

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT)

ACTION ALERTS

- The work of NAC for 2023
- Speak up for those Seeking Asylum (call for individuals to issue public comments in opposition to the Asylum Ban) (*sent twice*)

STATEMENTS

ISSUE: SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Content: This statement will send a strong message to Congress that describes the many positive impacts of SNAP while also delivering the simple message that SNAP must be protected and strengthened during Farm Bill deliberations.

Sent to: Members of Congress

Sponsored by: Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

ISSUE: THIS IS THE MOMENT TO ACHIEVE OUR CLIMATE TARGETS

Content: The statement calls on governments 'to care for their citizens, especially *the most vulnerable*, and to care for this Earth - *our common home*.' It references the need for integral human development to be one main approach and also names a **Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**. Both of these are linked directly to SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation for all and SDG 7 access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

The statement will be distributed among all UN National Delegates at the UN headquarters in NYC. At the invitation of the Laudato Si Movement, we signed on to the statement and shared it with others. Sr. Winifred signed on for the Congregation, Fran Eskin-Royer signed on for NAC.

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PUBLIC COMMENT (submitted by NAC)

With ties to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, an international congregation, I know well the need for the legal right to seek asylum - we have sisters, lay partners and programs in 72 countries that help those in need. People suffering violence and oppression need to be able to move and pursue a safer and better life. We, as the U.S., have a moral responsibility to welcome those in search of safety and freedom. Please change course on the proposed asylum ban – it will essentially stop asylum seekers in their tracks. Our nation is better than this.

Solicited by: Department of Homeland Security

PRESS RELEASE

On the CIUDAD JUAREZ FIRE calling for: a prompt and thorough investigation about the locked doors and swift and appropriate follow-up action; and an update to our migration policies, including a lifting of Title 42 and an ending of the Asylum Ban.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES IN WHICH NAC PARTICIPATED:

Ongoing and ramped up **preparation work for Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2023** (April 25 to 27, 2023). This year's theme: Swords into Plowshares: Achieving Enough for All and Pursuing Peace

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 67

DC Catholic Coalition Retreat Day, focusing on how we can more effectively engage together for change.

GS International Foundation Strategic Plan Presentation

Engagement in Province of Mid-North America Direction Statement Subgroups (Collaborate – Amplify Voice for Justice Group and Root Causes of Injustice Group)

QuickBooks Online training and teaching

Ecological and Economic Way of the Cross Filming

Grant work with US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking: collecting written stories from sisters engaged with immigrants/migrants vulnerable to trafficking for advocacy use.

Mid-North America Direction Statement subgroup.

Several other Coalition meetings on issues pertinent to NAC.