

February 24, 2022

Leader Charles Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Dick Durbin
711 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
1705 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chair Rosa L. DeLauro
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chair Jeanne Shaheen
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Matt Cartwright
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
H-310, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leaders of the House and Senate:

As negotiations move forward for a full year spending bill for fiscal year (FY) 2022, the undersigned organizations urge you to prioritize the following requests as the most critical immigration-related appropriations matters that are necessary to improve the immigration system and to assist millions of people harmed by severe deficiencies in the system. While these appropriations requests are not a substitute for the more substantial reforms the undersigned organizations have been fighting for in the Build Back Better Act, Congress can deliver transformative change by including them in an omnibus appropriations bill. We urge you to make them your priority.

- 1. Reducing Case Backlogs and Enhancing Citizenship Programs** Increase funding for USCIS and DOS to address crisis-level processing delays and customer-service deficiencies exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic that have led to families being separated, businesses unable to hire or keep essential workers on their payroll, people stuck waiting to naturalize, and individuals falling out of status while they wait. The President's budget of \$345 million would only address a little more than half of [USCIS's 4.4 million case backlog](#), and therefore an increase of funding to \$500 million is imperative. State Department consular affairs is still experiencing severe delays and has a

backlog of nearly 500,000 immigrant visas, and therefore DOS should receive comparable funding as USCIS. In addition, we urge you to include provisions that would recapture family-sponsored, employment-based, and diversity immigrant visas that went unused due to travel bans and COVID-19 pandemic processing delays. Finally, funding should be provided to enhance programs facilitating the integration of U.S. citizens by increasing allocations to the existing U.S. Citizenship and Integration grant program. Facilitating naturalization spurs economic benefits, including higher rates of income and increased homeownership rates, which strengthen local housing markets and tax base.

2. **Legal representation** Increase funding for adult and unaccompanied children legal representation programs operated for people in removal proceedings. Expanding legal representation improves not only the fairness of proceedings but also the efficiency of hearings and the appearance rates of people in court. In particular, we urge you to ensure the \$50 million in funding for the Department of Justice designated in the House FY 2022 CJS is enacted in the final CJS bill. Nothing is currently included in the Senate bill. While \$50 million is not sufficient to meet the high level of need, it will be a critical initial investment in these programs. We also support the funding in the House and Senate LHHS appropriations bills for unaccompanied children representation.

3. **Detention** Decrease funding significantly for immigration detention to levels at or below those proposed in the FY 22 House and Senate bills (as written, both provide funds equivalent to a daily detained population of approximately 28,500 people). At the time President Biden took office, the detention numbers had declined substantially to 14,000. While current detention rates have increased to almost 20,000, these figures are still lower than what the House and Senate bills propose and present an opportunity for Congress and the administration to lower detention spending more significantly. We urge you to set a lower level and not let detention increase again. DHS should also be prohibited from entering into contracts with private prison companies -- something President Biden promised to do but has only implemented with respect to the Bureau of Prisons.

4. **Good Governance at the Border:** Rescind any remaining and all previously appropriated funding for the construction of border wall. Transfer funds to land management agencies to mitigate environmental damage from wall construction. The number of Border Patrol agents exceeds what is needed and funding should be reduced.

We appreciate your attention to these important matters. If you have any questions please contact Greg Chen, Senior Director of Government Relations at the American Immigration Lawyers Association, gchen@aila.org.

Sincerely,

Adelanto Visitation & Advocacy Network
Advocating Opportunity
African Communities Together
AHRI Center
Alianza Americas
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, ACCE
America's Voice
American Immigration Council
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Arkansas United
Asian American Advancing Justice | Chicago
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Counseling and Referral Service
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
CAIR-CA
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for Law and Social Policy
Center for Victims of Torture
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Central American Resource Center (CARECEN-LA)
Central American Resource Center of Northern CA (CARECEN SF)
Church World Service
Cleveland Jobs with Justice
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Coalition of Community Organizations
Coalition on Human Needs
COFEM Council of Mexican Federations
Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, Inc. (CAB)
Community Asylum Seekers Project

Connecticut Shoreline Indivisible
Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Emerald Isle Immigration Center
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Equality California
Faith in New Jersey
Faith in Public Life
Faiths for Safe Water
Families Belong Together
Families For Freedom
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
Freedom Network USA
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of BPSOS-OK
Global Cleveland
Haitian Bridge Alliance
HIAS PA
Hispanic Federation
Human Agenda
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas
Immigrants' Rights Working Group - Democratic Socialists of America
Immigration Ministry of Mission Basilica, San Juan Capistrano, CA
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice
Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America (IFCLA)
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Interfaith Welcome Coalition - San Antonio
International Institute of Los Angeles
InterReligious Task Force on Central America
ISLA: Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy
Justice Action Center
Kamayan Coalition

Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
League of Conservation Voters
League of Conservation Voters - Chispa
Long Beach Immigration Forum
Make the Road Nevada
Make the Road New York
MCOHA CCLI
Migrant Center for Human Rights
MIRA Coalition
MomsRising/MamásConPoder
National Association of Filipino American United Methodist
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans
National Council of Jewish Women
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Education Association
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Partnership for New Americans
New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children
New York Immigration Coalition
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
OPAWL- Building AAPI Feminist Leadership
Oxfam America
Pilipino Workers Center of Southern California
Presente.org
Promesa Boyle Heights
Promise Arizona
Providence Mission Hospital - South Orange County Family Resource Center
Race Matters, First Congregational UCC
RFK Human Rights

SALVA

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team

SoCal Interdiocesan Immigration Task Force

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

Southern Border Communities Coalition

Temple Isaiah

Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles

The Advocates for Human Rights

The Immigration Hub

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

The Resurrection Project

TODEC Legal Center

UndocuBlack Network

Unidos MN

UnidosUS

Union for Reform Judaism

UNITE-LA

United We Dream

Vera Institute of Justice

WAVE Women for American Values & Ethics

Welcoming America

Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center