



July 17, 2017

Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
U.S House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Nita Lowey
Ranking Member on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) plays a critical role in securing our country from physical and cyber threats and implementing our immigration laws, as well as responding to emergencies stemming from national disasters. As you address our nation's funding priorities for these efforts, we urge you to continue to fund programs that help communities mitigate and respond to natural disasters and provide resources towards humane implementation of our immigration laws. Such implementation should be programmatically-sound, fiscally responsible, and respectful of family unity and human dignity; it also should enable migrants to seek both protection and access to due process.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) works in partnership with the federal government to provide services for immigrants and refugees, unaccompanied children and human trafficking victims. USCCB/MRS facilitates most of these programs through the Catholic Charities network. Catholic Charities ministries operate over 2,900 locations across the country and five U.S. territories. In 2016, the Catholic Charities network served over 300,000 immigrants and refugees with services such as case management, employment training, legal immigration services and resettlement assistance. Additionally, Catholic Charities agencies provided disaster relief and recovery services to over 100,000 individuals.

As a Church at the service of all God's people, we stand ready to work with the leaders of both parties to protect poor and vulnerable people, promote human life and dignity, and advance the common good. As you review the subcommittee-approved version of the FY 2018 DHS Appropriations Act and its accompanying committee report, please consider the following requests:

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

The proposed increase of immigrant detention bed space to the total of 44,000 ADP is an increase of 4,676 beds from FY 2017 and a marked increase from the FY 2009-FY 2016 average of approximately 34,000 beds/night. As mentioned in the committee report language, this bed space increase will be accomplished by expansion of private sector contracts and Inter-Governmental Service Agreements. **We strongly urge you to oppose this drastic increase in funding for immigrant detention and corresponding enforcement.** While immigrant detention is necessary to protect community safety in certain instances, large scale immigrant detention "engenders despair, divides families, causes asylum-seekers to relive trauma, leads many to forfeit their legal claims, and fails to treat immigrants with dignity and respect."¹ Of further concern is the expansion of private detention contracts given reports of lack of accountability and oversight of these facilities. It is disheartening to note: (1) the \$5.5 million dollar decrease for Alternatives to Detention funding and (2) the failure to reinstate the Family Case Management Program (FCMP). We are in favor of community-support case management models of alternatives to detention such as FCMP, and support the committee report language urging ICE to utilize elements of such programs, like legal orientation, case management and community NGO engagement to improve ICE's other existing alternative to detention programs. Such elements improve compliance and provide humane enforcement solutions.

The \$24 million in funding to support expansion of the 287(g) program should be opposed as well. These agreements between DHS and state and local officials allow the state and local actors to perform immigration functions such as the apprehension, or detention of undocumented immigrants. Such agreements may undermine the hard-won trust between immigrant communities and local police and could decrease the willingness of undocumented immigrants to report crimes

¹ USCCB/MRS and Center for Migration Studies, *Unlocking Human Dignity: A Plan to Transform the U.S. Immigrant Detention System*, May 2015, available at <http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/upload/unlocking-human-dignity.pdf>

to local law enforcement. In turn, this would hamper the ability of local law enforcement officials to investigate local crimes and ensure public safety in all communities.

Additionally, **we urge you to oppose the \$1.6 billion funding for the construction of a physical barrier between U.S. and Mexico.** We do not believe such an enforcement-only approach is appropriate. Moreover, we do not believe that such resources should be invested in a border wall. Instead, some of this funding should be dedicated to humane and more economical programs, such as alternatives to detention programs that utilize case management, legal services, and safe voluntary repatriation programs. In short, as Pope Francis has often repeated, we should be building bridges, not walls.

Lastly, we welcome the inclusion of increased funding to ICE for international and national investigations, as it relates to human trafficking and child exploitation. We appreciate the appropriation of \$15.7 million to forced labor investigations. The committee report language that encourages ICE to collaborate with NGOs and trafficking prevention efforts is commendable and we stand ready to work with you in combatting human trafficking. In this vain, additional funding for improved screening of child trafficking victims should be provided. We urge you to support a **\$5 million allocation to enable Border Patrol agents to identify and protect child trafficking victims at the border.** The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 requires CBP to screen children it encounters for indicators that they are trafficking victims. Funds should be appropriated for CBP orientation, training, and the hiring of child welfare experts.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP): Preservation of this program at its current level of \$120 million is essential. **We urge you to continue to support FEMA's role as administrator of the program and oppose the transfer of the program to Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).** The EFSP was created in 1983 to supplement the work of local service organizations (soup kitchens, food banks, homeless shelters, etc.) who provide services to those in need of emergency services. Since 2011, this program has been cut by 40% and those who in need of services cannot afford further reductions. Already, 2,800 fewer organizations are able to participate and partner in providing services. The EFSP has an innovative, inter-agency funding model which relies on a national board of leading social service agencies to distribute monies to local organizations best postured to meet local needs. Transitioning this program to HUD would weaken the strong collaborative governance that exists in administering this program.

Disaster Relief Fund (DRF): Robust funding for DRF federal assistance programs is vital. Multiple severe storms and floods made 2016 one of the most expensive years of disaster losses on record and the consensus among experts is that both the frequency and severity of disasters will continue to rise. A robust allocation of monies to the DRF also helps to ensure the necessary funds for critical local **disaster case management programs (DCM).** As part of a coordinated effort for community recovery after a disaster, DCM programs partner with local voluntary, faith-based and nonprofit organizations to promote effective deliver of post-disaster services, partner integration and improve capacity building.

Finally, we urge your support for the Aderholt amendment to include important Hyde-like protection to this appropriations bill. The Aderholt amendment should be enacted to ensure that the current practice prohibiting funding for elective abortion is continued, and to safeguard the conscience rights of any ICE employee who objects to facilitating an abortion.

We ask that you review these requests and also our supplementary materials on immigration-specific appropriations. At a time of budgetary constraints, the needs of the hungry, the migrant, and those affected by disasters should be prioritized.

Sincerely,



Most Reverend Joe S. Vásquez
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration



Most Reverend Frank J Dewane
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Domestic
Justice and Human Development



Sr. Donna Markham OP, PhD
President and CEO, Catholic Charities USA