

August 1, 2019

U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee
U.S. House and Senate Leadership

Dear Members of Congress,

We write to you from across different faith traditions and faith-based organizations to urge you to **prioritize non-defense discretionary funding for programs that address true human needs while reducing the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) budget for deportation, detention, and border militarization.**

Congress just approved a budget deal that raises the spending caps for non-defense discretionary spending. In the coming weeks, Congress will choose how much money each federal department and program will receive. Many of these departments oversee critical responsibilities ranging from anti-hunger and housing programs, to green infrastructure, education, and humanitarian assistance. As you determine funding levels for fiscal year 2020, we urge Congress to ensure all non-defense discretionary increases which resulted from the budget caps deal are invested in crucial programs that help every person realize their full God-given potential.

We believe that our nation's budget and the decisions made by Congress should be treated as a moral roadmap toward a world where every child of God is clothed, fed, safe, loved, and free. As people of faith, our various traditions command us to love our neighbors and welcome guests as we would welcome God.

It is with these values in mind that we raise our concern and **objection to the ever-increasing funding provided by Congress to DHS for immigrant detention and border militarization.** Faith communities have long stood against increased incarceration in favor of community-based alternatives to detention, mitigation of the root causes of forced migration, and meaningful reforms that would reunite families permanently and allow our communities to flourish. **We stand strong in our belief that more money for enforcement will only serve to exacerbate the plight of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants,** as we have seen unfold over the past few months at our southern border. As Congress determines allocation of non-defense discretionary increases, we faithfully urge you to decrease spending for detention, deportation and border militarization.

We urge Congress not to conflate enforcement funding with programs that provide relief and support to communities. Congress should instead carefully consider ways to invest in true humanitarian solutions. A pre-existing network of non-governmental organizations and faith communities are already engaged in reuniting families, providing legal support to people going to immigration court, and providing shelter for people in need. Investing in this community-based model is far less costly and more humane than incarcerating every immigrant.

Moreover, amid the finite funding increase for non-defense discretionary funding, there are myriad programs that need critical investment including education, nutrition assistance, housing assistance, development, and re-entry programs. Only one in six eligible children receive child care assistance, and only one in five low-income families with children are able to secure rental subsidies. We urge you to

invest in human needs priorities, not detention and deportation. We ask that Congress stop squandering funds for inhumane use in detention, enforcement and border militarization, which comes as the direct expense of other programs including government responsibilities within DHS outside of the realm of immigration enforcement.

Our nation is only as strong as the communities' in which we invest. Please prioritize funding true human needs over detention and deportation and reduce the overall budget of the Department of Homeland Security accordingly.

In faith,

African American Ministers In Action
Alliance of Baptists
American Baptist Home Mission Societies
American Friends Service Committee
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Bread for the World
Bridges Faith Initiative
Christian Community Development Association
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
Church World Service
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces
Daughters of Charity, USA
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Faith in Public Life
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Sisters of Mercy – Institute Justice Team
Sojourners
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries