



Committee on Migration
c/o Migration and Refugee Services, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
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September 5, 2017

Honorable Roy Blunt, Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Russell Office Building, Office 260
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Russell Office Building, Office 154
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Roy Blunt and Patty Murray:

As a Church at the service of all God's people, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration (USCCB/COM) **stands 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.** I write to request your support for appropriate federal funding of several accounts and programs that are crucial for at-risk immigrants, refugees, unaccompanied children, and trafficking victims. As you finalize funding for FY 2018, please consider the following requests. We urge you as leaders of the relevant Senate appropriations committee to exercise crucial humanitarian leadership to maintain appropriate funding for these accounts that impact the most vulnerable.

Refugee Protection

Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies:

We ask that Congress appropriate at least **\$1.69 billion** in Fiscal Year 2018 for the Refugee Entrant and Assistance (REA) account, an amount we believe would enable the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR) to adequately serve all vulnerable populations under ORR's care. As you know, the REA account helps state and local communities welcome and support refugees and other populations on their path to self-sufficiency. ORR also serves unaccompanied children, asylees, Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients, Cuban and Haitian entrants, victims of human trafficking, and survivors of torture. In FY17, ORR is expected to serve an estimated 175,000 newly-arrived individuals, in addition to other recently-arrived individuals. For these services, Congress appropriated \$1.69 billion in FY17 plus almost \$400 million in transfer and contingency funds for a total of \$2.1 billion in FY17. USCCB estimates that FY18 arrivals will be around 165,000 individuals. Given these continued large numbers, maintaining at least the \$1.69 billion base funding would be prudent minimum funding. And, maintaining highly flexible transfer authority would also be reasonable planning to meet unforeseen contingencies.

Protection of Unaccompanied Children

Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies:

Within the \$1.69 billion level of base funding that we suggest for the HHS REA account, we ask that Congress appropriate **\$948 million** to serve unaccompanied children (UAC). ORR provides custody and care, shelter, and support services to UAC apprehended in the United States by Department of Homeland Security. UAC are taken into the custody of HHS/ORR pending reunification or resolution of their immigration cases. We note with approval that the Office of Management and Budget recommended this level of funding for the line item in the REA account related to these children.

Combatting Human Trafficking and Protecting Survivors

Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies:

Within the \$1.69 billion level of funding that we suggest for the REA account, we ask that Congress appropriate **\$32 million** for the Office of Trafficking in Persons (OTIP), in the form of \$16 million to foreign national victims' protection and \$16 million to protection of U.S. citizen victims. We also ask Congress to appropriate **\$91 million** for the Department of Labor International Labor Affairs Bureau (ILAB).

OTIP oversees the care and treatment of all U.S. citizen and foreign national trafficking victims in the United States. OTIP identifies and serves trafficking victims and provides specialized case management. ILAB plays a critical role in efforts to eradicate child labor and address forced labor. Through its own reports, we know ILAB plays a major role in monitoring and reporting on labor practices in countries around the world. We strongly oppose the Administration's proposal to not fund the grant program within ILAB.

Members of USCCB/COM just returned from a solidarity and assessment trip to Honduras and El Salvador, where we witnessed the life-saving "Youth Builders" program conducted by our sister agencies Catholic Relief Services and Caritas in the region. This program provides many youth from these countries with a viable alternative to dangerous migration and the risk of being victims of human trafficking. If the ILAB grant program receives no funding, as proposed by the Administration, such life-saving programs would end.

Thank you for considering our recommendations.

Yours truly,



Most Reverend Joe S. Vásquez, Bishop of Austin
Chair, Committee on Migration
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops