



## Committee on Migration

c/o Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB

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November 20, 2018

Re: USCCB Requests for Continued FY2019 Appropriations Process

Dear Senator:

**As a Church at the service of all God's people, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) stands ready to work with the leaders of both parties to protect impoverished and marginalized people, promote human life and dignity, and advance the common good.** As Congress contemplates the end of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 appropriations process, many USCCB policy offices have already expressed or will later express their views on appropriations matters under their purview. Together, these views represent the breadth of concern of the USCCB. Today, I write on behalf of the USCCB Committee on Migration to request your support for our funding priorities with respect to three outstanding accounts for FY 2019: Commerce Justice Science, Department of Homeland Security, and State Foreign Operations. These three accounts are crucial for immigrants, refugees, unaccompanied children, and trafficking victims and are currently being funded through a Continuing Resolution until December 7, 2018. As you finalize FY 2019 funding levels, please consider the following requests:

### **Commerce Justice Science and Related Agencies (CJS)**

The House Full CJS Committee allocated funding for **100 immigration judge teams in FY2019** as a completion of a two-year plan (which includes FY 18) to hire a total of 200 additional immigration judge teams and to increase availability of court facilities to address the large docket backlog of the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). We urge you to accommodate this request.

**We also ask that Congress appropriate funding at the Senate S. 3071 level of \$10.4 million for the Administrative Review and Appeals/ Executive Office of Immigration Review (APA/EOIR) line item for the Legal Orientation Program (LOP), the Information Help Desks, and the Legal Orientation Program for Custodians of Unaccompanied Children (LOPC).** These programs help ensure court efficiency and individuals' greater knowledge of their legal rights and responsibilities, as well as increase the likelihood of compliance in immigration proceedings.

## Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

### Immigration Enforcement

For FY2019, the President requests **\$5.6 billion** for 65 miles of new wall in the Rio Grande Valley sector, 750 new Border Patrol officers and 2,000 new ICE agents, increased deportation capacity, and detention capacity totaling 52,000 beds. Congress likewise continues to propose increased enforcement funding, with the House recommending **\$3.05 billion** for Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Enforcement and Removal Operations (ICE/ERO) Custody Operations, (which funds the immigrant detention system), and the Senate recommending **\$2.89 billion** for the same account. Similarly, the House recommended **\$5 billion** for construction of 200 miles of new wall at the U.S./Mexico border through Customs and Border Protection Procurement, Construction & Improvements, and the Senate requested **\$1.6 billion** for construction of new wall at the U.S./Mexico border for the same account.

The Catholic Church acknowledges the right of nations to control their borders and governments' responsibility to protect the people within their borders. At the same time, we believe that those rights and responsibilities should be exercised in a manner consistent with their moral obligation to protect migrants and refugees. Enforcement measures should be proportionate and humane.

**For these reasons, we do not support further funding for new wall construction at the U.S./Mexico border and urge Congress, to the extent possible, to limit this funding, and at a minimum not to appropriate past the \$1.6 billion set in the Senate's FY 2019 bill, S.109.**

Additionally, we oppose further funding increases for the ICE/ERO/Custody Operations and support the FY 2019 Senate S.109 recommendation of \$2.89 billion. We are deeply concerned about the massive increases in immigrant detention particularly, the large average daily population numbers of detained which exceeds Congress's instructions set forth in the FY 2018 DHS appropriations law.

We urge Congress to direct DHS to further evaluate and monitor alternatives to detention (ATD) programs for cost effectiveness and compliance. We note with appreciation the FY 2019 House recommendation for \$213 million for the ICE/ERO/ATD line item, but we urge lawmakers to direct use of all ATD funding increases for community-sponsored case management programs, particularly those that enroll families and vulnerable populations, instead of using ankle monitors. We believe that alternatives to detention, particularly those that leverage community support and utilize case management, can be, for certain populations, a way forward that is cost-effective, ensures compliance with immigration laws, and most importantly is more humane than immigrant detention. **We also urge you to direct the reinstatement of the family case management alternative to detention program as presented and passed as Amendment 3 in the FY 2019 House DHS Mark Up.**

We further request that Congress provide **\$6.7 million** to Customs and Border Protection Operations and Support to enable Border Patrol agents to identify and protect trafficking victims, particularly children. We also support the FY 19 House Report Language on family separation. Lastly, we support the FY 2019 Senate DHS Report 115-283 language, requesting reporting on the detention of pregnant women. In general, we do not think it appropriate to hold pregnant immigrants in custody if it is not essential for public safety and order, and we are committed to ensuring that detained pregnant women and their unborn children receive suitable care and are treated in a manner that respects their human dignity.

## Other Important Immigration Priorities

We note that the FY 2019 Continuing Resolution extended the expiring Special Immigrant Non-Minister Religious Worker Visa program until December 7, 2018. We ask that Congress include language that would permanently reauthorize these statutory provisions in any bill appropriating funds for DHS for FY 2019. We also ask that Congress include in any DHS appropriations vehicle it passes a Hyde-like provision to ensure that federal funds not be used to fund elective abortions.

## **State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPs)**

For FY 2019, we urge Congress to fund SFOPs refugee related accounts at the **S. 3108 funding level of \$3.4 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA), \$1 million for Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA), and \$4.4 billion for International Disaster Assistance (IDA)**. These are amounts we believe would ensure ongoing service to displaced populations while responding to numerous, grave humanitarian crises. Further, we urge the Administration to make full use of ERMA during FY 2019.

MRA funds the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), providing overseas assistance to displaced refugees and funding for lifesaving services, including resettlement, while supporting U.S. allies and stabilizing refugee host countries in sensitive regions. ERMA is urgently needed due to escalating violence and record forced displacement in many parts of the world. The IDA account funds USAID to provide humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons. Meeting the needs of internally displaced persons helps prevent them from having to flee their countries of origin and become refugees.

**Finally, we urge Congress to appropriate \$40 million, the funding level set in S. 3108, for the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Person Office (J/TIP) for efforts to end human trafficking.** J/TIP needs these resources to ensure that it can administer anti-trafficking programming and research.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like to discuss these suggestions further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe S. Vásquez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joe" and last name "Vásquez" clearly legible.

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