September 17, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Speaker  Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515  Washington, D.C. 20510  

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Republican Leader  Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515  Washington, D.C. 20510  

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer, and Leader McConnell:

As Congress prepares to take up a short-term continuing appropriations resolution (CR) to provide interim funding for the federal government for the first days of Fiscal Year 2022, we write on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on International Justice and Peace and Committee on Migration, as well as Catholic Relief Services (CRS), to urge Congress to provide additional funding for Afghan resettlement and international humanitarian assistance and to express our views on several other urgent migration-related priorities.

As the international relief and development agency of the Catholic community in the United States, CRS provides life-saving humanitarian assistance and development programming around the globe, including in Afghanistan. The USCCB’s Department of Migration and Refugee Services, overseen by the Committee on Migration, carries out the commitment of the U.S. bishops to serve and advocate for refugees, asylees, and other forced migrants, immigrants, and other people on the move, including by playing a leading role in assisting Afghan evacuees and special immigrants and helping to reunite separated migrant children with their families.

Based on our experience, additional funding is required to support humanitarian assistance for Afghans at risk in the region and to support resettlement efforts here in the United States. Therefore, we support providing at least the Administration’s recent request for additional funding for the following: State-Emergencies in the Diplomatic and Consular Service; State-Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund (ERMA); State-Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA); and USAID-International Disaster Assistance (IDA). We also support the Administration’s request for additional funding for the ERMA account to ensure adequate funds are available to respond to urgent humanitarian needs globally, should they arise.

The Committee on Migration also supports the Administration’s requests for additional funding for: HHS-Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) including funding for Afghan resettlement and humanitarian needs and unaccompanied children; HHS-Children and Families Services Programs and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); and additional direct appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to enable it to implement the proposed new Afghan parolee program, more efficiently adjudicate refugee applications, and reduce the current backlog for processing immigration benefits, including naturalization.
In addition to supporting the Administration’s request for additional funding to meet urgent international assistance and migration challenges, the Committee on Migration also expresses strong general support for the Administration’s request that Congress include in the CR legislative language that would enable the United States to meet a variety of pressing needs. This includes support for requested legislative language that would empower the federal government to provide evacuation and resettlement assistance to Afghan parolees, provide a pathway for Afghan parolees to pursue lawful permanent resident (LPR) status, authorize TANF assistance to individuals relocated to the United States from Afghanistan, and provide reimbursements for nongovernmental organizations and others providing COVID-19 testing, shelter, and other services for persons who have entered the United States along the U.S.-Mexico border, and reunification services for separated children and their families.

The Committee on Migration also strongly support the Administration’s request for the enactment of legislative language authorizing resettlement services for separated children and their families. We note, however, that the Administration did not ask for additional funding to support this effort. We strongly urge Congress to consider appropriating additional funds in the REA account to ensure that the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and its partners have the resources needed to provide services to these children, as well as to provide services to the traditional populations served by ORR. We also urge Congress to consider broadening the class of children who would be protected by the language requested by the Administration.

Finally, the Committee on Migration urges Congress to include a provision in the CR that would permanently extend the special immigrant non-minister provision of the Religious Worker Visa Program, a program established in 1990 with broad bipartisan support that permits religious organizations to employ foreign-born religious workers who do much to help the communities we serve.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on these urgent matters.

Sincerely,

+ @Dorsonville + David J. Malloy

Most Rev. Mario E. Dorsonville
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration

Most Rev. David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford
Chairman, USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace

Sean Callahan
President and CEO
Catholic Relief Services

CC: All Senators and Representatives