FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 17, 2017

Media Contact:
Carlos Paz Jr.
202-252-0053
carlos.paz@mail.house.gov

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Letter Calls on Appropriators to Reject Increasing DHS Funding

Trump wall and mass deportation agenda undermines our public safety, economic well-being and values

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) Chairwoman Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham and CHC Immigration and Border Issues Task Force Chair Rep. Luis V. Gutiérrez sent a letter to Members of the Appropriations Committee calling on them to reject the proposed increases in funding for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) found in the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations bill.

In the letter, the Members cite specific issues they have with the appropriations bill and add, “This Administration’s immigration policies have been devastating to families, and we as members of Congress have a responsibility to mitigate this harm by reducing the funding that goes toward further attacks on our country’s immigrants and their families. We urge you to oppose a costly mass deportation agenda that undermines our public safety, economic well-being and values.”

COPY OF LETTER

July 17, 2017

Dear Appropirator,

As you consider the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations bill, we urge you to reject the proposed increases in funding for ICE and CBP, in particular for immigration detention and ICE and Border Patrol agents that will enable President Trump to continue building a massive deportation system. The funding
bill would enable the Administration to further increase its indiscriminate enforcement of immigration law that is hurting thousands of families, Dreamers, DACA recipients and others who have resided for years in this country.

President Trump requested $44.1 billion for DHS in his fiscal 2018 budget proposal, and this bill provides more than he requested with $44.3[1] billion. Rather than advancing practical solutions that reform our outdated immigration system, the bill increases ICE’s detention bed capacity to an all-time high of 44,000 beds maintained throughout the year and allows ICE to weaken detention standards. This bill also provides funding for the hiring of an additional 1,000 ICE agents and 500 Border Patrol agents. The Administration claims these increases will improve national security, but in fact it will result in the targeting of hardworking people who are contributing to their communities.[2]

We ask that the Committee decrease the number of detention beds in our nation’s already overgrown, expensive, and inhumane immigration detention system. Numerous reports have found serious abuses in our detention system; yet, DHS Secretary Kelly recently testified that he plans to lower detention standards.[3] With border apprehensions at a historic low, ICE is increasing apprehensions in the interior and putting immigrant communities at higher risk of apprehension, detention, and deportation.

We urge you to reduce the funding for ICE agents and to reject the increase of 1,000 ICE agents proposed in the bill. ICE arrests of individuals with no criminal conviction have jumped 156 percent and make up a larger share of overall arrests as compared to last year.[4] DHS should focus its resources on prioritizing actual national security and public safety threats, rather than targeting millions of unauthorized immigrants for removal.[5]

Funding for Border Patrol agents should also be reduced. We oppose the increase of 500 Border Patrol agents that are not supported by current conditions. The number of Border Patrol officers has increased dramatically over the past 14 years doubling from FY2002-FY2016. CBP has not been able to fill its currently funded positions as many applicants


struggle to pass the polygraph test administered before hiring. With apprehension numbers down, and current agency openings unfilled, appropriating $100 million to hire additional agents is a wasteful use of taxpayer dollars.

Finally, we urge the Committee to provide no funding for an ineffective border wall. This bill provides the $1.6 billion requested in Trump’s budget to build an unnecessary and operationally ineffective wall at our southern border.

This Administration’s immigration policies have been devastating to families, and we as members of Congress have a responsibility to mitigate this harm by reducing the funding that goes toward further attacks on our country’s immigrants and their families. We urge you to oppose a costly mass deportation agenda that undermines our public safety, economic well-being and values.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your considerable efforts on the FY2018 Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

# # #


The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), founded in December 1976, is organized as a Congressional Member organization, governed under the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives. The CHC is dedicated to voicing and advancing, through the legislative process, issues affecting Hispanics in the United States, Puerto Rico and U.S. Territories.