March 6, 2020

Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Re: Asylum Seekers in Remain in Mexico / “Migrant Protection Protocols” Policy

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

Our 153 legal representation, refugee assistance, faith-based, human rights, and community groups write to urge your agency to end the “Migrant Protection Protocols” (“MPP”), to allow asylum seekers to pursue refugee protection—from safety in the United States as required by U.S. law and treaties—and to inform you that we stand ready to provide legal representation and humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers in the United States.

On Friday, February 28, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California’s April 2019 injunction blocking the MPP policy, a ruling which was subsequently stayed as the government pursues appeal. We urge that your agency—and the Trump administration—immediately abandon efforts to prolong this legally flawed and dangerous policy. As we know full well from our work with people seeking refuge at our southern border, asylum seekers in MPP have been subjected to kidnappings, torture, assaults, and other brutal violence while in Mexico waiting for their U.S. immigration court hearings. In addition, MPP constitutes an insurmountable safety and logistical barrier to legal representation for many asylum seekers stranded in Mexico, as some of our groups detailed in a January 28 letter to you, which we again attach for your reference. About 95 percent of those in MPP are unable to secure legal representation.

We urge the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to uphold U.S. asylum law and allow asylum seekers currently subject to MPP into the United States so they can seek asylum from safety in this country, as required under U.S. law and treaties. The U.S. government is more than capable of managing refugee arrivals in humane ways without resorting to illegal border closures, threatening exercises of militarized force, and harsh, punitive policies.

As you surely know, represented asylum seekers overwhelmingly appear for their hearings, as do those with community support. Together, we will make every effort to ensure these asylum seekers can access pro bono legal representation and humanitarian assistance. Many of our organizations have extensive expertise working with refugee populations around the world; others are deeply rooted in U.S. border communities and have long histories operating faith-based or community shelters. Many of us will provide legal information about appearance
obligations and referrals to legal representation, trauma counseling, medical care and other humanitarian necessities. Many of those in MPP have family in the United States—including in California, Florida, New York, and Texas—with whom they can stay.

These men, women, and children—seeking asylum from Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela and elsewhere—have already suffered too much. Many have been stranded in dangerous and difficult conditions under MPP for a year or more already. They should not be subjected to additional harsh or punitive policies—including policies that block them from legal representation in their asylum proceedings—and should absolutely not be jailed in detention facilities and prisons.

We are happy to meet with your agencies and others to plan for a prompt, humane, and orderly end to the MPP program.

Sincerely,

Abuelas RGV
ACLU
African American Ministers In Action
Al Otro Lado
Ameinu
American Friends Service Committee
American Immigration Council
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Angry Tias
Anti-Defamation League
Arizona Jews for Justice
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asylum Seeker Assistance Project
Augustinian
Avodah
Bay Area Health and Legal Partnerships for Immigrant Youth
Benedictines for Peace
CAIR Coalition
Capuchin Franciscans, Prov. of St. Joseph
Catholic Coalition for Migrants and Refugees
Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona - Casa Alitas Program
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for Victims of Torture
Center Global
Centro Legal de la Raza  
Church Women United in New York State  
Church World Service  
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)  
Colorado JCRC  
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach  
Columbia Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic  
Community Change  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men  
Congregation Beth Israel  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces  
Congregation of the Mission, Western Province USA  
Detention Watch Network  
Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc.  
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries  
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill  
Families Belong Together  
Flint Jewish Federation  
Franciscan Action Network  
Freedom for Immigrants  
Freedom Network USA  
Glenmary Home Missioners  
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition  
Haitian Bridge Alliance  
Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program  
HIAS, Inc.  
Hispanic Federation  
Hope Border Institute  
Human Rights First  
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas  
Human Rights Watch  
Immigration Center for Women and Children  
Immigration Equality  
Immigration Hub  
Immigrant Defenders Law Center  
Immigrant Legal Defense  
Immigrants' Rights/International Human Rights Clinic, Center for Social Justice, Seton Hall Law  
Innovation Law Lab  
Institute for Women in Migration (IMUMI)
Interfaith Refugee & Immigration Service
International Refugee Assistance Project
International Rescue Committee
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Phoenix
Jewish Community Relations Council of Portland
Jewish Community Relations Council of Southern New Jersey
Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Jewish Family and Community Services
Jewish Family and Community Services East Bay
Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis
Jewish Family Services
Jewish Family Service of Colorado
Jewish Family Services of Columbus
Jewish Family Service of Greater New Orleans
Jewish Family Service LA
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
Jewish Justice Advocates of Temple Beth El of South Orange County California
Jewish Social Services of Madison
Jewish Vocational Service in Boston
Justice in Motion
Justice Revival
Keshet
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND, Inc.)
Kino Border Initiative
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice
Loyola Law School Immigrant Justice Clinic
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mishkan Chicago
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
NM CAFé
Orange County Jewish Coalition for Refugees
Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church
Passionist Solidarity Network
Pax Christi USA
Physicians for Human Rights
Poder Latinx
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province
Program for Torture Victims
Public Counsel
Rabbinical Assembly
Reconstructing Judaism
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Refugees International
Rian Immigrant Center
Safe Horizon
Saint Francis Friary
Sanctuary for Families
San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network
Sisters of Charity, BVM
Sisters of Charity of New York
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
Sojourners
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Southern Poverty Law Center
Spiritans
Tahirih Justice Center
Taylor Levy Law
The Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
The Jewish Community Relations Council of Atlanta
The Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province
Truah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Uri L’Tzedek
Union for Reform Judaism
United We Dream
University of Southern California Gould School of Law Immigration Clinic
Washington Office on Latin America
Witness at the Border
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)
Women’s Refugee Commission
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights