

May 8, 2023

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Vote Recommendation Opposing H.R. 2 Secure the Border Act of 2023

Dear Representative,

The undersigned state, local, and national immigration, civil rights, public health, education, religious, labor, climate justice, and other organizations write to respectfully request that you **VOTE NO** on H.R.2, the Secure the Border Act of 2023, set to receive a vote on the House floor on May 11. The bill would dismantle the asylum system and cause immeasurable harm to immigrant communities. The newly elected majority is driving an intentionally divisive agenda to amplify anti-immigrant animus without moral and effective policy solutions. We ask you to oppose this anti-immigrant bill that would:

1. **Deport Unaccompanied Children.** The bill would end Health & Human Services funding for legal representation of unaccompanied children in immigration proceedings, depriving children of the attorneys their safety depends upon. It would also provide only a cursory screening process for children at the border, risking children's summary return to human trafficking and other dangers. The bill subjects all unaccompanied children to an accelerated removal process worse than what currently exists, and allows for detention of unaccompanied children in jail-like border facilities for up to 30 days—ten times longer than permitted under current law.
2. **End Asylum.** The bill would effectively shut down our current asylum system by adding dozens of new restrictions on asylum, including eliminating the right to seek asylum for those who cross the border between ports of entry and barring asylum for those who transit through a third country. It would make it nearly impossible for migrants to seek asylum in the U.S. and significantly easier to deport asylum seekers, including families and children, into harm's way. This will only sow chaos at the border, rather than ameliorating it.
3. **Restart 'Remain in Mexico'.** The bill would restart the failed and dangerous Remain in Mexico program for all migrants, including unaccompanied children who were previously exempted under the Trump administration. Seeking to unilaterally return asylum seekers to other countries without consulting the receiving country nor the migrant results in refoulement of the migrant to danger and problematic foreign policy implications.
4. **Jail Immigrant Families.** The bill would require family detention for any families attempting to enter the U.S. to seek asylum, as well as any families who previously entered the U.S. without visas. Like all immigration detention, family detention centers have a well-documented history of abusive conditions, including inadequate medical care and mental health deterioration for asylum seekers, survivors of trauma, and children.
5. **Mandate E-Verify.** The bill would require E-Verify for all employers in the U.S., severely damaging our economy, harming American workers, and resulting in billions of dollars in lost government revenue. National implementation of E-Verify raises concerns

about efficiency, due process, and racial profiling and decreased employment among Latinos.

6. **Gut Programs that Work:** The bill would strip funding for the Alternative To Detention Case Management Pilot Program, Office of Immigration Detention Ombudsman, and the vital Shelter and Services Program, which has helped communities around the country receive reimbursement for costs related to humanitarian responses to migration. These programs have been effective at providing services crucial to preventing more deaths under CBP custody and immigrant detention and have reduced impacts on receiving communities.
7. **Burden our Local Communities by Making it Impossible for Employers to Hire Asylum Seekers with Work Authorization.** This bill eliminates work authorization for asylum seekers who cross between ports of entry and requires six month renewal periods for asylum-based employment authorization. Combined with USCIS processing time, this would effectively make it impossible for businesses, even in the face of labor shortages, to employ asylum seekers. These provisions will exponentially increase the backlogs at USCIS and make it even more difficult for USCIS to timely process applications. This runs counter to bipartisan efforts to improve the employment authorization process for asylum seekers and will create an unnecessary burden on local communities.
8. **Undermine Essential Partnerships with Humanitarian Organizations.** The bill would bar any and all DHS funding for NGOs, including faith-based NGOs, that provide shelter, transportation, food or legal assistance to vulnerable immigrants, including those who arrive on a visa and later become “inadmissible.” Congress should be investing more in non-profit organizations providing respite care, legal service providers, trauma-informed care and community-based service providers, not subjecting them to the punitive measures in this legislation. This measure would impact NGOs across the country that receive DHS funding, including organizations working with FEMA during an emergency—it’s “show me your papers” for the Red Cross.
9. **Resume Building Trump’s Border Wall.** The bill would restart the construction of the border wall, a harmful waste of taxpayer resources. It would allow DHS to exempt all border infrastructure construction, development, operation, and maintenance from any law except the Constitution, thereby reducing the rule of law at our borders. The bill would also restrict the ability for landowners, local communities and tribes to assert legal challenges opposing the construction of the wall, and thus pave the way for irreparable and unchecked harms to the borderlands. We have already seen the negative consequences from the Trump Administration era resulting in: bulldozed Native American burial sites; dynamited pristine mountain wilderness; segments of the wall being constructed in flood plains; and the unjust seizing of private ranches and farmlands.
10. **Eliminate Parole Authority.** The bill would decimate the parole power that presidents historically have used to parole individuals in response to humanitarian emergencies or in furtherance of foreign policy objectives. It also precludes the President’s recent parole programs for Ukrainians, Afghans, Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans, and cuts work authorization for parolees.

11. **Jail Any Person who Overstays a Visa.** The bill would jail and penalize immigrants who have violated any condition of their visa or overstayed by 10 days or more, even for violations that occur due to circumstances beyond the individuals' control such as a medical emergency. This provision would even make it a crime for anyone on a visa to apply for asylum, given they would not have left once their visa expired. Congress should focus on solutions that regularize the status of long-term residents and fix our broken immigration system.
12. **Balloon Border Agents.** The bill would require Border Patrol to hire enough agents to reach 22,000 on board (currently there are roughly 19,500) and restrict Border Patrol agents from performing "duties of processing coordinators." Processing coordinators currently perform duties such as transporting and processing migrants and carrying out mandatory welfare checks. With only around 1,000 processing coordinators currently in the field, this restriction would seriously hinder Border Patrol's efforts to fairly and efficiently process asylum seekers and carry out their law enforcement mission. CBP is overfunded with funding streams that push resources towards enforcement and wasteful surveillance, while humanitarian needs go underfunded.

We urge you to vote in ways that protect immigrants and **VOTE NO** against H.R.2, the Secure the Border Act of 2023 in the upcoming floor vote. We must oppose racist, xenophobic, unconstructive proposals that add fuel to hate and present no constructive and moral solutions. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

#WelcomeWithDignity Campaign
African Communities Together
Alianza Americas
America's Voice
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Immigration Council
American Immigration Lawyers Association
American Psychological Association
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
ASISTA
Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Bethany Christian Services
Bridges Faith Initiative
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for Law and Social Policy
Center for Popular Democracy (CPD)
Center for Victims of Torture
Children's Defense Fund
Chispa LCV
Church World Service

Coalition on Human Needs
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)
Community Change Action
Detention Watch Network
Esperanza United (formerly Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network)
Freedom for Immigrants
Freedom Network USA
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Futures Without Violence
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
ILRC
Immigration Equality Action Fund
Immigration Hub
Immigration Law & Justice Network
Indivisible
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Kino Border Initiative
Latin America Working Group
Lawyers for Good Government
League of Conservation Voters
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
MoveOn
MPower Change Action Fund
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project (NIPNLG)
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Lawyers Guild San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)
National Partnership for New Americans
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nextgen America
Oxfam America
People's Action
Prevention Institute
RAICES
Reconstructing Judaism
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Restaurant Opportunities Centers United
Save the Children
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sojourners
Southern Border Communities Coalition
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ Justice and Local Church Ministries
United We Dream
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
Witness at the Border
Women's Refugee Commission
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

State and Local Organizations

ACLU People Power Fairfax
Adhikaar
Al Otro Lado
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)
Alliance San Diego
Americans for Immigrant Justice
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta
AVAN Immigrant Services
Border Compassion Nonprofit
Border Patrol Victims Network
California Immigrant Policy Center
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (CRLA Foundation)
Carolina Jews for Justice
Central American Resource Center of Northern CA - CARECEN SF
Chispa Arizona
CLUE-Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
Coalición de Derechos Humanos
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Svcs inc
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington DC
Fellowship Southwest
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Fresh Start Refugee Assistance Center
Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Journey to Asylum
Just Neighbors Ministry
Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center
Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants
Make the Road CT
Make the Road NV
Make the Road Pennsylvania
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Michigan Immigrant Rights Center

Oasis Legal Services
Samaritans
SEIU CA
SEIU United Service Workers West
St. Mark's Presbyterian Church
St. Michael's University Church
Tennessee Justice for Our Neighbors
Texas Civil Rights Project
The Advocates for Human Rights
The Green Valley/Sahuarita Samaritans
The Resurrection Project
Tucson Samaritans
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center