

November 15, 2018

Dear Members of Congress,

As 37 national, faith-based organizations from many different traditions, we stand opposed to the existing, unconscionably high levels of unchecked and unaccountable spending on deportation agents, detention beds, and militarized border enforcement included in the Department of Homeland Security's budget. We have witnessed how this spending tears families apart, leaves vulnerable populations unprotected, and erodes our shared value to welcome the stranger. **As you consider spending levels for the rest of fiscal year 2019 (FY19), we urge you to reduce harmful and reckless immigration enforcement funding and reject any funding above FY18 enacted levels.**

**Each person caught in our bloated, profit-driven, and unbridled immigrant detention system is a child of God and deserves to be treated with humanity and dignity.** Nearly 45,000 people per day are detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) - an unprecedented high and resulting in spending levels above what Congress appropriated in FY18. Multiple reports showcase the systemic abuse within the detention facilities, including [use of force](#) by officers, deaths stemming from [medical negligence](#), and arbitrary use of [solitary confinement](#). In addition, [reports](#) have [documented](#) unconstitutional, dangerous conditions in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) holding facilities, such as [freezing](#), overcrowded, and filthy cells; deprivation of beds, bedding, and sleep; and [inadequate](#) food, water, medicine, medical care, and basic sanitation and hygiene items. Faith communities witness firsthand the [psychological and medical](#) toll incarceration takes on those detained, their families, and our communities. **Congress must stop rewarding ICE and CBP for abhorrent detention conditions and opaque [overspending](#),** and instead reduce immigration detention funding, exert oversight over detention practices, and direct the administration to restore less costly, more efficient, and humane community-based [alternatives to detention](#).

**Harmful border enforcement policies drive asylum seekers, migrants, and other vulnerable individuals into more dangerous and often deadly routes.** This administration's border priorities are fiscally irresponsible and a humanitarian disaster, and do not make our nation any safer. The deleterious ecological, economic, and human impact of militarizing border communities cannot be overstated. This includes walls, fencing, and increased enforcement. Currently, fences and walls are planned that will cut through private farms and ranches, wildlife refuges and state parks, harming landowners and the local tourism industry. Our faith partners in border communities are asking for Congress to invest in their schools, businesses, and healthcare - not needless military build-up. **Congress must not allocate any more tax dollars to the dangerous myth that walls and militarized infrastructure bring security,** and instead listen to border residents' call for sound, humane immigration and border policies that facilitate community wholeness.

**Every day families are separated at the hands of a punitive, outdated immigration system.** Especially galling have been the "zero tolerance" border prosecution policies that resulted in mass family separations. This year, we witnessed a horrendous abuse of power as ICE and Border Patrol agents tore children away from their parents as they presented themselves at the border asking for protection and

relief from violence and extreme need. Moreover Congress has yet to act to provide permanent protections for many vulnerable populations including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and others who have been long-time contributors to our nation and need immutable protections. Ramping up the number of agents who could carry out a large scale deportation of these populations will needlessly separate more families, as well as contribute to worker shortages in numerous industries including construction, education, and health care. To hold ICE and CBP accountable to the standards of common sense, integrity, transparency, and humanity, **Congress must stop the unrestrained funding for, and expansion of powers to, the agencies fueling family separation and incarceration.**

Every dollar further entrenches an immoral system fueling mass incarceration, family separation, human rights violations, and unaccountable enforcement in our communities. **We urge Congress to end this pattern and to faithfully take concrete and substantive steps to reduce funding for unchecked immigration enforcement.**

Sincerely,

African American Ministers In Action  
American Friends Service Committee  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action  
Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy  
Church World Service  
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach  
Conference of Superiors of Men (Catholic)  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces  
Disciples Center for Public Witness  
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries  
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative  
Faith in Action  
Faith in Public Life  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quakers)  
Ignatian Solidarity Network  
Interfaith Worker Justice  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Council of Churches  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Justice for Our Neighbors

National Religious Campaign Against Torture  
NETWORK Lobby  
Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church  
Pax Christi USA  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
Scalabrini International Migration Network  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Institute Leadership Team  
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community  
Sojourners  
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries