

December 12th, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

CC: Members of Congress

As **235** religious leaders and **143** national, state, and local faith-based organizations representing many faith traditions, we write to express deep concern over reports that your administration is considering agreeing to harsh and permanent asylum restrictions amid unrelated spending discussions. The asylum proposals under discussion – including the codification of an asylum “transit” ban, the dramatic nationwide expansion of fast-track deportations through expedited removal, and the imposition of a much more restrictive credible fear screening standard that will limit people from having their case heard – are extreme, harmful, and contradictory to our values.

As communities of faith, we are called by our principles and sacred texts to the spiritual practice of welcome. Our congregations have historically played key roles in meeting the needs of displaced people, and that has included a leading role welcoming asylum seekers arriving at the southern border. Faith communities at the border and across the country have worked together with the federal government towards establishing a more dignified and orderly process for those fleeing persecution and seeking safety at our shores.

We face real challenges at the border that demand a coordinated and well-resourced response. The asylum restrictions under consideration would do nothing to support that needed effort. Deterrence-based policies at the border have repeatedly proven ineffective. Certainly, they do not prevent those fleeing danger from seeking life-saving protection at the border, and they fail to make the asylum process more efficient, orderly, or humane.

Attempting to leverage the safety, freedom, and well-being of some of the world’s most vulnerable people for unrelated foreign policy objectives is a violation of our call to honor and uphold the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, no matter their country of origin or the circumstances they face.

An increasing proportion of asylum seekers arriving at the border in recent months have been families with children, and unaccompanied minor children. For generations, our sacred texts and practices have affirmed and upheld the essential nature of the family. Many of our faith traditions stress the importance of protecting the most vulnerable among us, and thus call on us to safeguard the well-being of the most vulnerable, including families, children, and other at-risk individuals. Unfortunately, the proposals under consideration would weaken protections and eliminate due process for many families and children, needlessly putting them at risk of being returned to danger.

Our nation’s diverse faith traditions call us to love our neighbor, accompany the vulnerable, and welcome the sojourner. The asylum provisions under consideration are not in line with our country and our communities’ long legacy of welcome. We urge your administration and members of Congress to reject the permanent asylum restrictions under discussion and support solutions that would live up to our values and welcome the most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Faith Based Organizations:

Accompaniment & Sanctuary Coalition Colorado Springs
Adorers of the Blood of Christ US Region JPIC office
Alliance of Baptists
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
Associate of Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Beacon Presbyterian Fellowship
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Bridges Faith Initiative
Buena Vista Community Institute
Calvary Presbyterian Church
Central Unitarian Church - Westwood NJ
Christ the Servant Peace and Social Justice Committee
Church Women United in New York State
Church World Service
Congregation B'nai Israel - Northampton, MA
Congregation B'nai Israel Tikkun Olam Committee
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes (CSA)
Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries
Detroit Friends Meeting (Quakers)
Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services Inc
Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington DC
Downtown United Presbyterian Church
East Bay Sanctuary Covenant
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Faith In Action
Fautleroy Church, UCC
First Congregational Church UCC
First Lutheran Church, Greensboro North Carolina
First Parish Concord Immigration Justice Task Force
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
GRACE/End Child Poverty California
Gracia Divina Minquadale UMC
Green Valley Sahuarita Samaritans
Haitian Outreach
HIAS
Holy Cross Ministries of Utah
Holy Cross Sisters
Holy Detour Entertainment Productions
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, JPIC-USA
Hope Border Institute

Immigration & Refugee Task Force, ELCA New England Synod
Immigration Law & Justice Network
Immigration Law & Justice Network
Immigration Law and Justice New York
Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America (IFCLA)
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Interfaith Welcome Coalition - San Antonio
InterReligious Task Force on Central America
Iowa Unitarian Universalist Witness/Advocacy Network
Islamic Relief USA
Jemez Peacemakers
Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Jesuits of the US Central and Southern Province
Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice
Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice of Western MA
Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay
Jewish Women International
Journey's End Refugee Services
Justice and Advocacy Ministries at Disciples Home Missions
Justice For Our Neighbors North Central Texas
Justice Revival
Kehilla Community Synagogue
Kino Border Initiative
Korean American Sanctuary Church Network, Inc.
Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church
Lakeshore Baptist church
Latin America Task Force of the Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice
Long Island Immigration Clinic/Sisters of St. Joseph
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry - New Mexico
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA)
Mary of Magdala ECc
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Mosaic Compassion
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Sanctuary CT

Newman Hall Nonviolent Peacemakers Group
North Shore Presbyterian Church
OLS Care of Creation Ministry
OLVM Sisters
Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters
Pax Christi Florida
Pax Christi Illinois
Pax Christi New York State
Pedro Arrupe Jesuit Institute
Pilgrim United Church of Christ
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator (Viatorians)
Race Matters, First Congregational UCC
Red Jesuita con Migrantes LAC
Rio Grande Borderland Ministries
Rochester ACTS Religious Leaders
Rosalie Rendu Center
San Mateo Quaker Worship Group
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific
Province
SHARE Foundation
Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, Inc.
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
Sisters of Jesus And Mary
Sisters of Mercy - Burlingame, California
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York
Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, PA
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, LA
Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order of St. Francis
Sisters of the Presentation
Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, IA
Sisters of the Presentation
Sojourners-SojoAction
Southeast Michigan ELCA Synod Immigration and
Refugee Task Force
St. Elizabeth Catholic Church
Strangers No Longer (Michigan)
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The Episcopal Church
The United Methodist Church
The United Methodist Church General Board of
Church and Society
Thrive International Programs, Inc.
Tucson Queer Sangha
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Action of New Hampshire
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalist FaithAction NJ
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of McMinnville

Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry of North
Carolina
Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic
Community
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Hidalgo County
Texas
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church
Ministries
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice

Faith Leaders:

Rev. Dr. Eileen Altman
Pastor Ricardo Angarita
Rev. Marilyn Bahena, retired Chaplain
Rev. April Baker
Rev. James Barry
Rev. Jorge Bautista
Sister Joyce C. Bell, IHM
Deacon David Billiy
Rev. Dr. Gilford Bisjak
Deacon Leo T. Bitak, D. Min.
Provincial Bursar, Fr. Giovanni Bizzotto, c.s.
Reverend Debbie Blane HR
Rev. Juliet Bongfeldt
Sister Laetitia Bordes, SH
Rev. Gene Boutilier
Sister Caryn Brennan
Fr. Corey Brost, C.S.V.
Sister Joan Brown, osf
Rev. Alexis F. Brown
Sister Anna Marie Broxterman
Sister Judith Carle
Sr Norma Carney
Rev. Marilyn Chilcote
Sr. Christa Cunningham
Joanne Clavel, osf
Sister Faith Colligan
The Ven. Catherine Cooke
Sister Kathleen Corbett, SL
Amanda Craft, Assistant Stated Clerk of the
General Assembly, PCUSA
Rev. Nicole Crouch
Deborah J. Cruz, President - JUJustice Washington
Rev. Jim Dale
Rev. Lauren Davis
The Rev. Canon John Denaro
Kathleen Desautels, SP
Sister Marie DesJarlais
Rev. Phil Dieke
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Sister Patricia Dowler. PBVM
Dolores Doyle, PbvM
Rev. Anne Dunlap
Michele Dunne, OFS
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Rev. Dr. Linda M. Eastwood
Rabbi Bruce Elder
Pastor James Erlandson
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Sister Anita Fearday
Rev. John Feldhacker

Dr. Virginia Feldman
Pastor Emeritus Rev. John Fife
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Rev. Rock Fremont
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Sister Eileen Gannon, OP
Sister Sarah Ganser
Rev. Jennifer Garcia
Rev. Courtney Geibert
Elizabeth Giarrusso, CSJ
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Deacon Catherine Gillette
Rev. Mary Gilthvedt
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Rev. Carl Thomas Stroud Gladstone
Rev. Justo Gonzalez II
Br. Michael Gosch, CSV
Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb
Reverend Jisan Tova Green
Rabbi James Greene
Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Griswold
Pastor Olivia Gross
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Sister Beatrice Haines
Pastor Anne Hall
Reverend Carol L. Hall
Carol Hallmeyer, snjm
Rev Karla Halvorson
Rev. Ranwa Hammamy
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Rev. Karl J. Hester
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S. Fran Hoffman
Rev. Jay C. Hogewood, Ph.D.
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Sister Tracey Horan, SP
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Sister Charlene Hudon
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Rev. Sonja L. Ingebritsen
Sr. Ohyllis Jaszkiowiak
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Reverend Scott Jenkins
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Rev. Dr. Theon Johnson III
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Sister Eleanor Joyce
Reverend Sally Juarez
Sister Bernadine Karge
Rev. John Grindler Katonah

Sister Joan Kaucher, CSJ
M Jean Keeley, OP
Rev. Kellie Kelly
Sr. Mary Kennedy, OSF
Rev. Dr. Edward J. Kern
Rev. Gini King
Rev. Alice Dawn King
Margaret J. Kling, csjp
Sister Marilyn Ann Kofler
Emily Kvalheim, Certified Candidate for Ordained
Ministry
Rev. Alena Lamirato
Sister Janet Lander
The Rev. Betty E. Landis
Martha Larsen, rsm
Rev. Deborah Lee
Caroline Lehman, Chair, Immigrant Action
Network,
Barbara Lenarcic
Sr. Leora Linnenkugel, OLVm
Sister Mary Litell
Rev. Michael P. Lonergan
Father Raymond Lopez ofmcap
Sister Marie Lucey, OSF
Karen M Lydon SCA
Sister Josephine Macias, CDP
Sister Helen Therese Mack
Sr. Dolores Maguire, Pastoral Leader
Rabbi Bonnie Margulis
Marie Dennis, Senior Director, Catholic
Nonviolence Initiative
Sister Lucille Martinez, olvm
Sr. Maria Elena Martinez, osf, Provincial Minister
of St. Francis Province, Redwood City, CA
Rev. Andy Mayer
Reverend Kendal L. McBroom
Sister Patricia McCrann, snjm
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Pat Millen OSF - JPIC Coordinator
Sister Kathleen Mitchell, FSPA
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