



Working to Reduce Poverty in America

September 13, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C., 20510

Chair of the Board
Neal Black

President & CEO
Sr. Donna Markham OP, PhD

Episcopal Liaison
The Most Reverend
Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of Venice, FL

Dear President Biden, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell:

As leaders in the network of Catholic Charities USA, whose staff and volunteers have been on the frontlines in responding to long-term and recent crises of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers coming to the United States, we write to request additional, urgent action from the federal government. Service to our immigrant and refugee brothers and sisters has been core to Catholic Charities since the 19th century. In 2021, the Catholic Charities network assisted 608,000 migrants with a range of services to respond to humanitarian and legal needs and also resettled over 13,000 Afghan arrivals since September. This crisis is not theoretical. It shows up on the streets and in the neighborhoods in Arizona, California, Illinois, New York, Texas, and Washington, DC – and numerous other communities.

It is beyond any single state's capacity. The current historic level of migrant arrivals requires an increased federal response, both immediate and long-term. The federal government has the responsibility of assuring the safe and orderly integration of newcomers into our country. Nonprofits such as Catholic Charities share in that responsibility by providing care and services appropriate to their ministries. Without financial and broader operational support from the federal government, nonprofits – in addition to providing humanitarian services – will be left with the onerous responsibility of combatting conditions that worsen migrants' vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation, homelessness, and crime. Therefore, we urge you to provide additional funds, resources and logistical support to respond to the needs of the large numbers of arriving migrants.

I. Need for federal resources and intergovernmental coordination

As we continue to respond to the growing needs of asylum seekers, we are mindful that demand for these services will increase dramatically upon the termination of border enforcement policies, such as Title 42. Therefore, we urge the following actions be taken by federal authorities to respond in a coordinated and effective manner to address the current challenges our communities, agencies and local governments face in serving unsponsored asylum seekers:



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- **Establish Humanitarian Reception Centers.** Make appropriate declarations to establish humanitarian reception centers in border cities and interior parts of the country to build sustainable capacity to serve the large number of noncitizens that are arriving. These reception centers, operated by nonprofits in collaboration with FEMA (or another appropriate federal agency) and state and local agencies, would provide basic services, including information to support onward travel and assistance connecting noncitizens with U.S. sponsors. Assistance with short-term housing options for unsponsored migrants will provide additional time to connect these individuals with support networks and arrange for long-term housing, which would provide them with a permanent address where immigration authorities may send written correspondences.
- **Boost Federal Efforts to Combat Trafficking.** Additional resources are needed to respond to rising concerns of migrants' vulnerability to various forms of trafficking and exploitation. We urge the federal government to collaborate with nonprofits and state officials to implement necessary review procedures for U.S. points of contact to prevent and protect against human trafficking.
- **Provide Additional Funding.** Increase funding allocations through FEMA to expand capacity and resources of federal, state and nongovernmental agencies to meet the growing demand for humanitarian services. Such funding must be supplemental to other essential funding EFSP provides for other domestic programs.

II. Need for immediate action to stop and remedy the misuse of nonprofits' addresses on official immigration documents

There is increasing and widespread concern by Catholic Charities agencies and other service providers of the misuse of their addresses on official immigration documents issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to asylum seekers. Incorrect addresses will cause those seeking asylum to miss court appearances and jeopardize their status because they may never receive their documents. While we welcome recent conversations with DHS component agencies to address these concerns, this discussion has not yet properly addressed the legal and logistical challenges this situation presents. DHS must stop listing Catholic Charities' addresses on future documents without the entities' expressed consent. Additionally, DHS should implement a manageable process to serve migrants their legal documents without unnecessarily prolonging the detention of migrants and asylum seekers. DHS should designate appropriate staff to respond to these concerns.

III. Appropriate use of legal authority to protect vulnerable populations

While Catholic Charities is committed to welcoming our immigrant sisters and brothers with charity and respect, collaboration between local and federal entities and a recognition that our agencies can assist but not resolve this predicament, is critical to addressing the current migration trend. Exercise of legal authorities to protect vulnerable populations and provide temporary employment authorization documents would help mitigate the impending homelessness crisis among the noncitizen population. Therefore, we request that the administration designate countries for Temporary Protected Status that are

experiencing temporary, unsafe conditions, for example, Venezuela,¹ Nicaragua², the Democratic Republic of Congo³, and other countries whose nationals are displaced in the U.S. and unable to return safely.

While these necessary actions are partial and temporary, they address the immediate needs of our nation, of those seeking asylum in the United States, and of Catholic Charities and other agencies that serve them. It is important to reassert, however, that the long-term solution remains for Congress to pass fair, humane and comprehensive immigration reform legislation. Upholding human dignity and promoting the common good is central to Catholic Charities' mission and the best values of our nation. We remain committed to carrying out our humanitarian ministry and look forward to continued collaboration with various government agencies to serve people in need.

We will follow up with appropriate staff regarding next steps.

Sincerely,



Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD
President & CEO



Marguerite D. Harmon
CEO
Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona, Inc.



Appaswamy "Vino" Pajanor
CEO
Catholic Charities, San Diego

¹ See "Letter on U.S. Catholic community support for robust use of TPS, July 19, 2022," <https://bit.ly/3R49PLB>.

² We recognize that TPS protection for certain Nicaraguan nationals in the U.S. remain in effect due to a federal court order. However, given ongoing reports of extraordinary conditions in the country, making return to the country unsafe, a new designation is necessary to protect nationals that are displaced in the U.S. "White House press secretary responds to EWTN's question about Nicaraguan persecution of Catholics," Catholic News Agency, Aug. 25, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3Tq0Y8L> (last visited Aug. 30, 2022). "Nicaraguan government takes over opposition newspaper headquarters," Reuters, Aug. 23, 2022, <https://reut.rs/3R1SPpv> (last visited Aug. 30, 2022).

³ Ongoing armed conflict, violence, and food insecurity in the Democratic Republic of Congo justify a designation. "Armed Conflict and violence in Democratic Republic of Congo," International Committee of the Red Cross, <https://bit.ly/3AADhSI> (last visited Aug. 30, 2022).



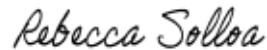
Msgr. Kevin Sullivan
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cc: The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services