



Working to Reduce Poverty in America

May 8, 2023

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

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., 20515

Dear Speaker McCarthy and Minority Leader Jeffries:

As President of Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), I wish to express our strong opposition to the **Secure the Border Act of 2023 (H.R. 2)**. If adopted, this legislation would severely restrict vulnerable people's access to asylum, detain more families including children, undermine U.S. efforts to effectively manage immigration, and dismantle the public-private infrastructure currently in place to manage the humanitarian crisis at the southern border and its impact throughout the country.

The gospel calls us to provide shelter for those who are homeless, feed the hungry, and "welcome the stranger." The work of Catholic Charities is humanitarian not political. While we do not oppose all the provisions in H.R. 2, several of them, if enacted, would severely hinder the government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from aiding migrants who need services, care, and assistance.

The proposed legislation would reverse many protections for migrants and restrict asylum access, including long-standing protections that promote the best interest and safety of unaccompanied children who arrive in the United States. H.R. 2 would defund Alternatives to Detention (ATD) programs that provide participants access to basic services such as housing, medical care, and legal representation. Additionally, H.R. 2 would prohibit funding to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for disbursement to faith-based organizations and other NGOs, effectively cancelling the cooperation of these organizations with federal, state, and local governments in receiving newcomers, combatting human trafficking, addressing homelessness, and responding to natural disasters and other emergencies. The end result would be the dismantling of a system to help migrants and local communities rather than its improvement to meet the challenges of the moment.

No one can deny our immigration system is broken. Moreover, the situation at the southern border is dire and needs a compassionate, humane, and orderly response. However, many of the provisions in H.R. 2 are contrary to these values and will threaten the lives of vulnerable persons seeking refuge, burden state and local communities, and disrupt our nation's ability to respond to disasters.

While we strongly oppose this legislation, we continue to call on Congress and the administration to work together to reform our immigration system and to support policies that are just, humane and well-coordinated. We look forward to continuing to work with you to find solutions that uphold human dignity and promote the common good.

Sincerely,

Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD
President & CEO
Catholic Charities USA

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

