

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 11, 2024

The Honorable David Joyce
Chair
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
2006 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Henry Cuellar
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Joyce and Ranking Member Cuellar,

As you work to finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations for Homeland Security, we strongly encourage you to prioritize critical funding to support the Shelter and Services Program (SSP). Particularly, we ask you to include at least \$3 billion for FEMA’s SSP account, to provide urgent resources to cities, states, and towns encountering high volumes of migrant arrivals.

Under the current immigration system, asylum applicants are stuck in legal limbo after initially submitting their application, waiting months or years for an answer to their asylum request. In fact, some migrants are expected to wait up to 6 years for their initial hearing.¹ Furthermore, there are currently more than three million cases stuck in immigration court.² To make matters worse, asylum seekers must wait 150 days before being able to work and provide for themselves, forcing them to rely on States and the Federal government for support. Communities across the United States are struggling to meet the financial needs of asylum seekers trapped in immigration court backlogs. Without any change to the structure of our asylum system, the number of cases will continue to grow, making it even more challenging to efficiently process applications and provide safety to approved applicants fleeing danger.³

Multiple bipartisan groups of lawmakers have worked toward immigration compromises, including the recently unveiled national security supplemental negotiated by Senate Democrats and Republicans. However, the bipartisan Senate deal has already been discarded and House Republican leadership has not expressed intent to bring bipartisan immigration reform to the floor before the election.⁴ Congressional gridlock on immigration reform has exacerbated the need for SSP dollars to support affected cities and towns.

¹ “A Mounting Asylum Backlog and Growing Wait Times,” trac.syr.edu, December 22, 2021, <https://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/672/>.

² Miriam Jordan, “One Big Reason Migrants Are Coming in Doves: They Believe They Can Stay,” New York Times, January 31, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/31/us/us-immigration-asylum-border.html>.

³ U. S. Government Accountability Office, “U.S. Immigration Courts See a Significant and Growing Backlog | U.S. GAO,” www.gao.gov, December 13, 2022, <https://www.gao.gov/blog/u.s.-immigration-courts-see-significant-and-growing-backlog#:~:text=The%20delays%20postpone%20decisions%20for>.

⁴ Igor Bobic et al., “Republicans Who Screamed about a Crisis on the Border Oppose a Plan to Fix It,” HuffPost, January 30, 2024, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/republicans-border-deal-donald-trump_n_65b80899e4b0102bd2d5c0d4.

Local communities across the country have stepped up to provide humanitarian support to those in need. In Woburn, Massachusetts local community leaders and school teachers worked to clothe and feed migrants.⁵ In Denver, one neighborhood Facebook mom’s group has grown to multiple parts of the city, helping migrant families with everything from clothing and food to transportation to various meetings and appointments.⁶ In Chicago, volunteers ensured that over 100 migrants were rehoused before their shelter closed down.⁷ However, without additional federal resources, these communities and so many others can only do so much. There is a resounding need from cities and towns across the country for increased federal support to provide migrants with short term humanitarian services. The bipartisan border deal which failed in the Senate appropriated \$1.4 billion in SSP dollars, mirroring the amount included in President Biden’s supplemental request. However, the actual financial need far surpasses the \$1.4 billion included in the border supplemental. Currently, individual cities themselves are needing billions to keep up with the growing demand, with mayors of affected cities requesting \$5 billion in federal support.⁸

As this need continues to climb, it is clear that the current funding levels for SSP in FY24 Appropriations remain severely inadequate. Furthermore, since immigration reforms are extremely unlikely in the short term, the need for SSP funding is all the more urgent. In order to meet the growing need, we urge you to include at least \$3 billion in funding for the Shelter and Services Program in the Homeland Security FY24 Appropriations bill, and request that you work to provide more funding to support local communities providing humanitarian aid to migrants in need.

Sincerely,



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

⁵ Jenna Russell and Sophie Park, “As Migrants Are Placed around Massachusetts, Towns Are Welcoming but Worried,” The New York Times, September 10, 2023, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/10/us/migrant-crisis-massachusetts-woburn.html>.

⁶ Kevin Beaty, “How a Facebook Community of Denver Moms Are Meeting the Needs of New Migrant Arrivals Where the City Isn’t,” Denverite, January 9, 2024, <https://denverite.com/2024/01/09/denver-migrants-mutual-aid-moms-helping/>.

⁷ Jenna Russell, “Volunteers Help Migrants Find Permanent Housing in Chicago,” Governing, October 23, 2023, <https://www.governing.com/housing/volunteers-help-migrants-find-permanent-housing-in-chicago>.

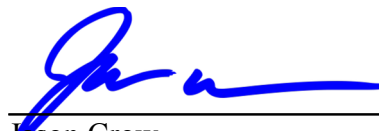
⁸ Letter from the United States Conference of Mayors to Senators and Representatives, November 7, 2023, <https://knowlegis.cq.com/file/download/1vF9R1CHj6P/Mayors+Letter+to+Congress+on+Security+Supplementa1+110723.docx.pdf/>.



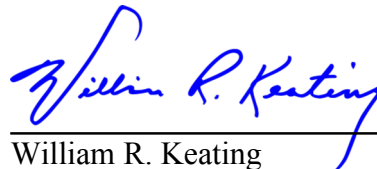
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



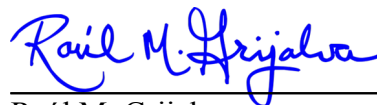
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



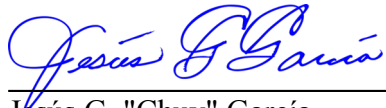
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



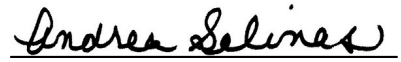
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



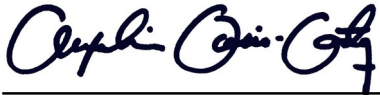
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



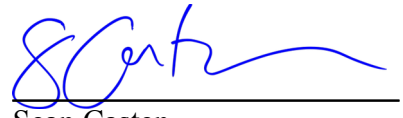
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress