

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
*Speaker*

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
*Majority Leader*

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
*Minority Leader*

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
*Minority Leader*

The Honorable Kay Granger  
*Chairwoman, Committee on Appropriations*

The Honorable Patty Murray  
*Chair, Committee on Appropriations*

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
*Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations*

The Honorable Susan Collins  
*Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations*

The Honorable Dave Joyce  
*Chair, Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security*

The Honorable Chis Murphy  
*Chair, Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security*

The Honorable Henry Cuellar  
*Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security*

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
*Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security*

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

March 29, 2023

**Re: FY 2024 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations**

Dear Members of Congress:

The undersigned national, state, and local organizations demand that you prioritize significant reductions to immigration enforcement funding through the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations. Immigrant communities and advocates are deeply dismayed by Congress' consistent failure to respond to migration with humanity and compassion. Instead, elected officials continue to approve status quo spending on punitive immigration enforcement, despite a deluge of evidence demonstrating the failings of this approach.

As you close out a second decade of funding for ICE and CBP—agencies that target, incarcerate, and deport beloved community members and people seeking safety in the U.S.— we urge you to turn a new leaf towards a more just immigration system. **Specifically, we urge you to stand by immigrant communities and hold these government agencies accountable by prioritizing the following:**

- Reduce ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) funding, particularly for Custody Operations and Alternatives to Detention
- Reduce U.S. Border Patrol Operations funding, particularly for additional Border Patrol agents
- Reduce funding for CBP border security technologies
- No new funding for border barriers and rescind previously appropriated, unspent funds for border wall construction
- No further restrictions on asylum, including any language to extend or codify Title 42

- Restrict DHS' authority to transfer or reprogram funding into ICE ERO, U.S. Border Patrol, or for the purposes of border barrier construction

As we share this letter, people in immigration detention are fighting for their lives. Early this month, Cristian Dumitascu died while in ICE custody at the Otay Mesa Detention Center, adding to the more than 220 people who have lost their lives in detention. While ICE attempts to assure the public of the safety and adequacy of medical services in its facilities, [advocates](#), [medical experts](#), and [government oversight bodies](#) have long documented rampant medical neglect throughout the system—as recently as [this fiscal year](#) when details involving discrepancies between the official autopsy and death report filed by ICE for Melvin Ariel Calero-Mendoza indicated his death was preventable. Yet when people in ICE custody seek to protest the conditions of their detention, they [face violence and retaliation](#), ranging from threats of solitary confinement and cutting off lifelines like family visitation to [cruel and inhuman force feeding](#) practices.

Instead of being accountable for these injustices and moving us away from this abusive system, [recent reports](#) revealed that the administration is considering reviving the use of detention for migrant families. There is a [mountain of evidence](#) detailing the lasting physical and psychological damage that family detention causes, especially for children, [including](#) Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), suicidal or self-harming behaviors, neurodevelopmental disabilities, and chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension. It would be unforgivable for Congress to once again allow ICE to inflict such suffering on children and parents by proactively funding these operations or neglecting to hold ICE accountable to upholding the safety and dignity of migrant families.

We are also concerned with the ongoing construction of border barriers across the southwest. Most recently at Friendship Park in San Diego, construction to replace the existing barrier with a 30ft barrier began earlier this year. Barriers like these are not only harmful to the environment but can be fatal. A recent [report](#) found that over the past year there has been a rise in accidents and serious injuries caused by falls from the border wall. Evidence shows that barriers force people to cross in more remote, dangerous regions that often lead to death. In FY 2022, [CBP reported a record number of migrant deaths](#), 853, since it began tracking in 1998. The harms of physical and virtual barriers are exacerbated by an array of anti-asylum policies that round out an evidently deadly deterrence strategy. In January, the administration announced intentions to roll out a lineup of policies that further strip the asylum system and rely on inhumane Title 42 expulsions and expedited removal to respond to migrants seeking safety at our Southern border. We remain in fear of the mass damage to the borderlands and preventable loss of life that will result from doubling down on this anti-immigrant approach, and urge Congress to not stand idly while our borders are closed to people most in need.

CBP is the second largest funded agency in the Department of Homeland Security with 19% of the total department budget. Within CBP, Border Patrol is an [abusive](#) and [unaccountable](#) force that has inflicted fear and violence on border communities and immigrants and contributes to the over-policing of Black, Brown and Indigenous communities. For years, Border Patrol has operated with lack of oversight and accountability leading to abuse and death across our nation's borders. The Southern Border Communities Coalition has [documented over 260 deaths](#) as a result of an encounter with Border Patrol agents since 2010. Instead of funding more Border Patrol agents, as requested in the FY24 Budget, we must provide oversight and accountability to prevent the further loss of life in the border region.

Besides the immense trauma these agencies inflict on immigrant communities, ICE and CBP also woefully mismanage taxpayer dollars. For years, advocates [sounded the alarm](#) at the agencies' [consistent disregard](#) for and [manipulation of](#) Congressional appropriations. Last year, despite receiving its highest ever appropriation, ICE still took advantage of DHS' transfer and reprogramming authority to compensate for what it claimed was

a [\\$345 million shortfall](#). Meanwhile, records obtained through the Freedom of Information Act by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) revealed that [long-time misreporting](#) on ICE's so-called "Alternatives to Detention" by contractor BI, Inc.—a subsidiary of private prison company the GEO Group—may have resulted in inflated payments, and therefore reported costs, by as high as 31 percent. Recently published research has also exposed how ICE engages in ["circular transfer" practices](#) as methods of retaliation and labor trafficking, wasting millions in federal funds each year to torture immigrants in custody.

DHS has itself previously admitted to wasting potentially billions in federal resources from its agencies. An internal investigative report [detailed a failed operation](#) to tie protestors in Portland to a terrorist plot that did not exist, carried out by agencies like CBP and other intelligence entities. Yet, the Biden administration's FY 2024 request, which includes even higher levels of funding for enforcement and an enormous slush fund that further diminishes spending accountability, recklessly ignores this history.

Congress cannot accede to writing yet another blank check for ICE and CBP. Now is the time for bold leadership. We are looking to Congress to stop putting immigrant lives at risk and start acting out the values of freedom and dignity you were elected to uphold.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Immigrant Rights  
Afghans For A Better Tomorrow  
Al Otro Lado  
Alianza Americas  
Alianza Sacramento  
Ameinu  
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)  
Amnesty International USA  
APALA - San Diego  
Arizona Justice for our Neighbors  
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC  
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence  
Avodah  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action South Jersey  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action California  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action Maryland  
Bridges Faith Initiative  
CA Collaborative for Immigrant Justice  
Californians for Pesticide Reform  
Carolina Jews for Justice  
CASA, Inc.  
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos: United Workers Center  
Church World Service  
Cleveland Jobs with Justice  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)  
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC)

Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)  
Community Change Action  
Community Justice Exchange  
Comunidad Maya Pixan Ixim  
Comunidades Sin Fronteras CFS - CT INC  
Connecticut Shoreline Indivisible  
Cosmovisiones Ancestrales  
Detention Watch Network  
Disability Justice League, Bay Area  
Doctors for Camp Closure  
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities  
Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project  
Faith in New Jersey  
Families for Freedom  
FIRM/FIRM Action  
First Friends of New Jersey & New York  
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project  
Freedom for Immigrants  
Freedom Network USA  
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Immigrant Action Alliance  
Immigrant Defenders Law Center  
Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America  
ISLA: Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy  
Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice of Western Mass  
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action  
Jewish Community Action  
JUNTOS Philadelphia  
Just Detention International  
Justice At Last  
Justicia Digna  
Lab/Shul  
Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center  
Legal Aid Justice Center  
Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention  
Make the Road NJ  
Make the Road NY  
Mariposa Legal, program of COMMON Foundation  
Mijente  
Movement for Justice in El Barrio  
Muslim Advocates  
Muslim Counterpublics Lab  
Muslim Justice League  
Muslims for Just Futures  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Immigrant Justice Center  
National Immigration Law Center

National Immigration Project  
National Lawyers' Guild-SF Bay Area chapter  
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice  
New Sanctuary Coalition  
NorCal Resist  
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project  
OCRRN  
Project ANAR  
Quixote Center  
Respond Crisis Translation  
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network  
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)  
Showing Up for Racial Justice  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team  
Society of the flora, fauna & friend  
Sojourners  
South Texas Human Rights Center  
Southern Border Communities Coalition  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
Takoma Park Mobilization—Equal Justice  
The Border Network for Human Rights  
The Bronx Defenders  
The Mami Chelo Foundation  
The Sex Workers Project of the Urban Justice Center  
Transformations CDC  
True Colors United  
Tsuru For Solidarity  
UndocuBlack  
Unitarian Universalist Ministry of California  
Unitarian Universalist Refugee & Immigrant Services & Education  
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice  
United We Dream Network  
Voces Unidas RGV  
Voice for Refuge Action Fund  
Washington Association Criminal Defense Lawyers  
Washington Defender Association  
Win Without War  
Witness At The Border  
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights