

NETWORK Lobby Immigration Priorities

Catholic Social Justice teaches that all people are made in the image and likeness of God and so possess an equal and inalienable worth. Because of this essential dignity, each person has a right to what is necessary to reach his or her full potential.

For far too long, our immigrant siblings have waited for Congress to pass legislation that affirms their dignity by providing them access to citizenship. The efforts of successive administrations and Congress have eroded long-standing protections of immigrants in the U.S. This has been particularly harmful to Black, Brown, and Indigenous people.

What Congress Can Do:

✓ INVEST in Programs that Increase Collective Wellbeing of Communities

We urge Congress to:

- Ensure that Shelter and Services Program (SSP) is fully funded at \$800 million in FY24.
- Distribute funding equitably and transparently to border and interior organizations.
- Ensure funding be made available as a grant or contract, not exclusively as a reimbursement.

The Shelter and Services Program (SSP) was authorized by Congress to primarily assist border communities by providing such communities along the border with robust critical funding for shelter, transportation, and emergency services. The programs support resources to help them increase shelter capacity, emergency services, and transportation to alleviate the strain they face every day. The SSP funds in 2023 are being divided unequally and not enough it being used to support border communities.

As people seeking asylum are moving from border communities to interior states, it is important to provide support and long-term services for them and the communities who welcome them. Important community support services, including legal, housing, transportation, education, social, job training, English language, food security, healthcare, medical, and mental health services are critical to protection.

Our taxpayer dollars should be used to keep families together and give everyone the resources they need to thrive, by investing in communities.

✓ **DIVEST Funds from ICE and CBP**

We urge Congress to truly shift away from a punitive response to migration by prioritizing meaningful funding reductions in the following areas for FY 2024:

- Decrease the funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE):
 - Decrease detention to no higher than 15,000 people as the average daily population, where it was at the start of the Biden administration.
- Cut funding for US Customs Border Patrol Operations (CBP):
 - Cut funding for agents and surveillance technologies.
 - Fully rescind previously appropriated, unspent funds for border wall construction.

Every day, millions of taxpayer dollars are wasted to fuel a system that keeps tens of thousands of immigrants and asylum-seekers locked up by ICE and CBP in a sprawling network of about 200 immigration detention facilities while they fight for a chance to stay in the United States. Many more at the U.S. southern border are denied their right to asylum by CBP and forced into deadlier routes to seek safety.

The only way forward is to begin scaling back ICE and CBP's sprawling infrastructure of detention, agents, and border militarization by reducing their overall budgets.

On May 17, 2023, an 8-year-old girl died in a CBP detention facility in Harlingen, Texas after being held for over a week awaiting deportation. The militarization and dangerous custody holdings used at the U.S. border have created fatal consequences for those seeking their right to asylum. Congress must stand against custody holdings and militarization at our border.

Congress should also reject any attempts to direct further funding for immigration militarization programs outside of regular order appropriations this year. Whether through a supplemental funding bill for DHS, transferring funds within DHS, defense spending to deploy troops or the national guard at the border, or any attempts to further militarize the border, additional funding is harmful and should be rejected.

Congress must also resist any and all efforts to use the appropriations process to further restrict the human right to seek asylum.