

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 6, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security 2702 Martin
Luther King Jr. Ave., SE Washington, DC 20528

Dear President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas:

We join our mayoral counterparts in our gratitude for your ongoing work and partnership regarding immigrants entering the United States via the Southwest Border.

We, Members of Congress representing Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, and New York City, echo our counterparts' appreciation for the supplemental appropriation you have proposed to help our communities navigate and support new arrivals and the work you have done to expand work authorization both for Venezuelans who arrived before 7/31 and for CPB-1 entrants, which will provide those populations meaningful access to work.

We also echo our colleagues' request for additional action. We affirm the following requests:

1. **Additional federal funding.** While we are greatly appreciative of the additional federal funding proposed, our city budgets and local taxpayers continue to bear the brunt of this ongoing federal crisis. Cities have historically absorbed and integrated new migrants with success, but the challenges brought by the new border arrivals are due not only to the high numbers but also the diversity of nationalities, the large share arriving as families, and the overwhelming number who seek asylum. Given the impact this crisis has had—and continues to have—on state and local budgets, we respectfully advocate for additional funding. Right now, Denver is spending almost \$2 million a week on shelter, New York City has surpassed \$1.7 billion in spending, and Chicago has spent over \$320 million. Our cities need additional resources that far exceed the amount proposed to properly care for the asylum seekers entering our communities. Relying on municipal budgets is not sustainable and has forced us to cut essential city services. We need additional federal funds to assist those arriving in our communities without hindering our ability to manage other city functions. We request an appropriation of \$5 billion to cover the expenditures our cities have already incurred and to continue serving the growing number of people arriving in our communities.

2. **Accelerate approval of work authorization and adjudication for eligible applicants.** We are pleased to see expanded funding to expedite adjudication and work authorization approvals. It is critical that sufficient capacity is provided to meet your goals of 30-day turnarounds for work authorization. It is our understanding that a large population of newly temporary protected status (TPS) eligible individuals will still potentially wait upwards of six months to have their work authorizations processed and confirmed. Our cities are full of recent arrivals to the United States who have applied for Employment Authorization Documents (EAD) but await the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) adjudication. Current wait times range from six months or longer because USCIS lacks the capacity to process applications in a timely manner. Funding for USCIS comes primarily from expensive fees charged to applicants requesting immigration or naturalization benefits. Increasing the speed at which EAD applications are processed is crucial to avoid additional backlog. We ask that supplemental funding earmarked for EAD adjudication and processing be provided to USCIS to lower

processing times to under 30 days. The funding should include increased adjudication times for asylum seekers, and we further support waiving fees for applicants.

3. **Dramatically increase access to work authorization.** While many states are thrilled to learn of the Administration's new TPS rule for Venezuelans, in many of our cities more than 75 percent of the folks currently in our shelters will not be eligible either under the 7/31 arrival window or the CPB-1 eligibility. All of the newcomers arriving in our cities are looking for the chance to work, and every day we get calls from business leaders who have unfilled jobs and want to hire these newcomers. The only obstacle to us helping them help themselves is federal restrictions on work authorization. Without any path to legal work, we know these new arrivals will have no hope but to end up homeless or reliant on long-term public support. We can successfully welcome and integrate these newcomers and help them pursue the American Dream if they have a chance to work. We know that you and Congress will decide on the preferred policy for how many newcomers you want to admit to the country. Our strong request is that anyone who has arrived in this country and is approved with an Alien Registration Number, or A-Number, has the ability to work. This will alleviate much of the need for government support. Whether the solution takes the form of a significantly increased number of legal visas to work or accepted appointments through the CBP-1 app we can help you resolve this crisis if every newcomer arrives in our cities with a work authorization approved within the first 30 days of entry.

4. **Adopt a collaborative federal approach around coordinated entry.** Our cities and states can far better handle the flow of new arrivals if there is a coordinated entry and distribution process for newcomers once they arrive. This ability would increase dramatically if each new arrival could access work authorization within 30 days. With work authorization provided we are confident that we could lead a coalition of cities that could identify shared available capacity, welcome newcomers in a way that would set them up for success and relieve the burden on border cities and destination cities receiving far greater numbers than can be supported. The federal government and nonprofit partners—not the governors of the states where recent immigrants arrive—must coordinate the geographic movement of recent arrivals. The federal government has done this quite successfully with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) which has regularly coordinated with communities across the United States to receive recently arrived refugees. We encourage the administration to work with nonprofit partners to coordinate the location and geographic movement of recent arrivals at the southern border, including the placement of regional coordinators in major cities to help ensure that recent immigrants arrive where sufficient capacity exists.

We are hopeful that we can work together to create an immigration and asylum system that will treat our newcomers with dignity and be fair and equitable to cities and neighborhoods across the country. Know that we stand ready to support the Administration and our mayoral counterparts in moving these solutions forward. We look forward to learning the outcome of the mayoral meetings with the Administration.

Sincerely,



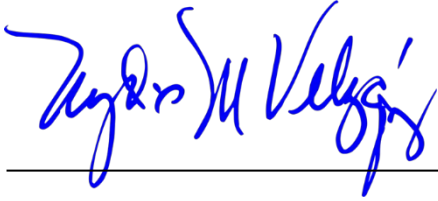
Member of Congress
Delia C. Ramirez



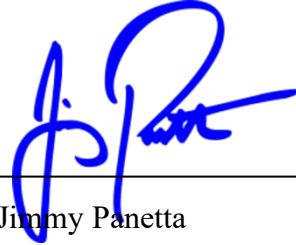
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



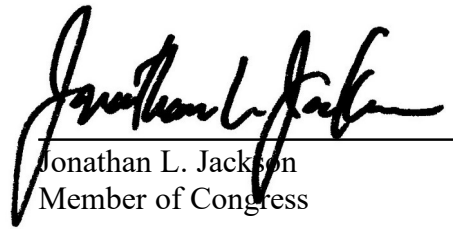
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



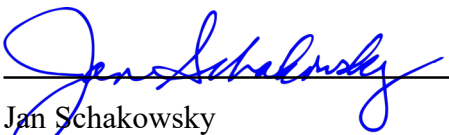
Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



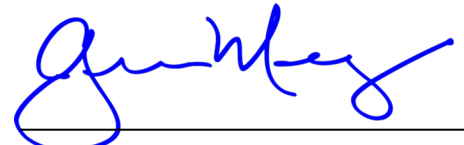
Jamaal Bowman
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress