

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 14, 2023

The Honorable Mike Johnson

Speaker

United States House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries

Minority Leader

United States House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer

Majority Leader

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell

Minority Leader

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

I am writing to express my unwavering commitment to champion the rights and dignity of the immigrant community.

I represent Illinois' Third Congressional District. Our district is proudly home to a diverse community of immigrants and asylum seekers, whether they have been here for decades or recently arrived. I am the daughter of a woman who bravely crossed the Rio Grande while pregnant with me and the sole Member of Congress married to a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient. My personal connections give me a unique and profound understanding of the urgent need to create pathways to legal status for all those who have the courage to seek opportunity and safety in our great nation.

I write with deep concern regarding the ongoing appropriations and supplemental negotiations, particularly as it relates to border provisions. Immigrants, both those seeking asylum and those waiting for Congress to create legal pathways to citizenship, must not be used as a bargaining chip. I strongly urge you not to include any harmful immigration provisions in the supplemental and appropriations process, especially provisions of House Republican H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act of 2023.

I would also encourage us to reject concessions that:

- Expand the inhumane, abusive immigration detention system,
- Increase CBP operational funding used for detention, rapid removals, and other harmful enforcement,
- Increase investment in fast-track and foreign deportation programs that deprive immigrant families of due process,

- Expand custodial “community-based residential facilities” and DHS temporary housing facilities that appear to be akin to family detention centers, or
- Grant DHS authority to utilize funds to facilitate “voluntary returns,” in which people are often coerced to give up their rights in our nation and return to dangerous conditions.

Each of these measures threatens to separate families and children, expand the number of children and families indefinitely incarcerated in immigration jails, subject almost all undocumented immigrants, including many Dreamers, to expedited removal processes, and narrow asylum seekers' already limited chances to access avenues to legal status. These measures threaten to effectively dismantle the U.S. asylum system and eliminate legal tools for a safe and orderly immigration process.

As we negotiate, it is long past time that we consider how we address immigration beyond the border. In the interior of our nation, we have severe employment shortages affecting every aspect of our economy. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported that, as of August 2023, we have 9.6 million job openings, not considering the devastating loss of farmworkers throughout the U.S.

If we are concerned about migration and border security, we would do well to abandon the policies that have been unsuccessful for the past three decades. Throwing billions of dollars at security and enforcement has not successfully slowed migration. We must invest in solutions that show promise to address the root causes of migration and mitigate the US workforce shortage.

To that end, I encourage that, should Democrats offer up provisions meant to address immigration and border security, we offer the following:

1. Support regional migration solutions in the Americas. Support humanitarian and development financing initiatives for stabilization, regularization programs, migration pathways, and integration initiatives.
2. Increase resources to increase the number of immigration judges, asylum officers, and field staff at the border so that determinations regarding asylum may be made in weeks, not months. We must reestablish judicial review to ensure that persons given expedited treatment at the border have due process.
3. Provide increased resources to interior cities to expedite the resettlement of people from the border to the interior of the U.S. It would be prudent to use federal resources to coordinate the placement of new arrivals into communities with workforce shortages.
4. Establish economic development centers for manufacturing in the Northern Triangle to encourage large-scale economic development that can slow the pace of people seeking entry to the U.S. while simultaneously addressing future supply chain disruption.

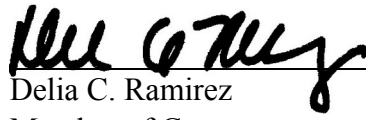
If investments in security and enforcement must be made, they should not be made without significant concessions related to relief. I encourage us to expedite work permits for new arrivals and expand work authorizations for long-term undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. via Parole-In-Place and TPS. We must eliminate the “unlawful presence and the overstay bars” for all existing parole programs.

While we eagerly anticipate the opportunity to work on comprehensive immigration reform, I believe we cannot negotiate away the contributions of so many who have invested in America and are only waiting for us, as legislators, to create a pathway for their contributions to be recognized.

I look forward to collaborating with you and our colleagues to create an immigration system that embodies our nation's values, welcomes those seeking refuge, and treats all individuals with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I eagerly await your response and, more importantly, your continued support for a just and compassionate immigration policy.

Sincerely,



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress