

April 10, 2025

Chairman Rand Paul
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Gary Peters
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Mark Green
House Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Bennie Thompson
House Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Chuck Grassley
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Dick Durbin
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Jim Jordan
House Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Jamie Raskin
House Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters, Chairman Green, Ranking Member Thompson, Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Durbin, Chairman Jordan, and Ranking Member Raskin:

We, the undersigned 85 local and national faith-based organizations, urge you to consider the constitutional rights and inherent dignity of all immigrants as you draft the budget reconciliation bill. Our faith traditions share a common call to seek the common good in public life, a commitment that extends to immigrants in our communities. Across our diverse faith traditions, we welcome people of all backgrounds, national origins, and incomes to partake in worship. If Congress were to approve the funding proposed under this bill to facilitate millions of deportations, it would shatter families and devastate worship communities.

Within the first three months, the administration has already massively stepped up immigration enforcement, detaining and deporting immigrants across immigration statuses. Increasing funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) undermines the stability and well-being of immigrant families and the broader community. Increasing funding for immigration enforcement by the unprecedented margins proposed in the budget reconciliation bill would exacerbate the climate of fear permeating our communities and supercharge widespread deportations.

The current proposals to provide at least \$200 billion in immigration and border enforcement funding in the reconciliation bill demonstrate a concerning shift in federal government priorities

away from supporting the basic needs of Americans. In the two decades since the U.S. Department of Homeland Security was created in 2003, Congress has provided an estimated combined total of \$409 billion for ICE and CBP. Providing at least \$200 billion in immigration and border enforcement would amount to an increase of more than 43% in a single bill. To meet deficit targets, committees may propose tax-and-spending policy changes such as additional restrictions for safety net programs Americans rely on. Cutting human needs to fund a massive increase in immigration and border spending shifts federal government priorities away from providing for the basic needs of the American people.

ICE and CBP have a history of infringing on human and constitutionally protected rights. Conditions of negligence, abusive solitary confinement, harassment and discrimination, and substandard conditions are well documented throughout ICE's expansive network of detention facilities.¹ ICE contracts out the daily operations for its vast network of immigration detention facilities to numerous for-profit prison companies. GEO Group, one of these, has secured three new federal contracts, collectively representing around 5,000 new detention beds in the last three months.² Most concerning, immigration enforcement has significantly expanded in scope in the past few months. Hundreds have been detained in foreign prison camps;³ lawful permanent residents "green card holders" with non-violent records are being detained;⁴ and ICE has detained and sought to deport valid visa holders who participated in public protests.⁵ U.S. citizen children and individuals with tribal membership have also been swept up in deportation operations.⁶ Internationally recognized human rights of concern include the right to worship, work, seek asylum, an adequate standard of living, a fair trial, freedom and expression and peaceful protest, and the right not to be arbitrarily arrested or detained.⁷ Increasing funding for agencies that cause harm to immigrants and infringe on international norms contradicts our faith's moral call to love our neighbor as ourselves and welcome the immigrant.

¹ "'Barbaric' and 'negligent' treatment in ICE detention, inspections found : NPR" NPR, August 16, 2023

<https://www.npr.org/2023/08/16/1190767610/ice-detention-immigration-government-inspectors-barbaric-negligent-conditions>

² "Investor News: The GEO GROUP" <https://investors.geogroup.com/news-events-reports/investor-news>

³ "Judge Blocks Deportations of Venezuelans Under Wartime Law", New York Times, March 15,

2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/15/us/politics/trump-alien-enemies-act-deportations-venezuelans.html>; "'Nazis got better treatment,' judge says of Trump administration's Alien Enemies Act deportations", ABC News, March 24, 2025,

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/appeals-court-hear-arguments-deportation-alleged-venezuelan-gang/story?id=120094673>

⁴ "Green Card Holder Who Has Been in US for 50 Years Detained by ICE", Newsweek, March 24, 2025,

<https://www.newsweek.com/lewelyn-dixon-green-card-detained-ice-2049154>; "The people legally in the U.S. who have been detained by ICE or refused entry", The Independent, March 25, 2025, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/ice-detention-centres-american-citizens-tourists-b2720960.html>;

"UW Medicine employee, green card holder detained by ICE in Tacoma", KUOW NPR News, March 24, 2025, <https://www.kuow.org/stories/uw-medicine-employee-green-card-holder-detained-by-ice-in-tacoma>;

⁵ "These Are the Students Targeted by Trump's Immigration Enforcement Over Campus Activism" Time Magazine, April 1, 2025, <https://time.com/7272060/international-students-targeted-trump-ice-detention-deport-campus-palestinian-activism/>

⁶ "Tribal Nations Urge Citizens to Carry ID as ICE Raids Increase", Native News Online, February 1, 2025,

<https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/tribal-nations-urge-citizens-to-carry-id-as-ice-raids-increase>; "U.S. citizen child recovering from brain cancer removed to Mexico with undocumented parents", NBC News, March 12, 2025,

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/us-citizen-child-recovering-brain-cancer-deported-mexico-undocumented-rcna196049>

⁷ "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", United Nations, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

Immigrants are active participants in many of our congregations and places of worship and are integral to religious communities. The current efforts of the government to carry out the removal of all immigrants who enter or remain in violation of immigration law have led many to abstain from attending worship and being involved in their faith community.⁸ Our religious communities run a broad array of ministries that are often co-located at places of worship where they serve as community hubs. These ministries provide food for the hungry, shelter for the unhoused, ESL and citizenship classes to immigrants, and humanitarian and disaster response aid. In particular, the rescission of the protected areas guidance, which emboldens ICE to conduct enforcement actions at places of worship, schools, and hospitals without prior authorization, has significantly impacted these programs. It has reduced the number of participants who feel safe seeking assistance, thereby diminishing the effectiveness and reach of our ministries.

The aftermath of the 2019 worksite raids at Mississippi poultry plants illustrates how intensified immigration enforcement can have lasting effects on communities. These raids, among the largest in history, led to the separation of hundreds of families, overwhelmed the immigration court system, and exacerbated an injustice by prosecuting the immigrants affected by the raids, while no top executives faced indictment.⁹ In light of today's shifting policies, one survey found that 58 percent of mixed-status families feared that they or someone they loved could be deported.¹⁰ It's important to recognize that immigrants, like any group of people, are diverse and cannot be generalized as threats. Many people with no criminal background who have lived in this country for decades, those who have temporary lawful status, and in some cases individuals with permanent legal status have nevertheless expressed fear of deportation or worry they may lose their status or permission to remain in the U.S. Researchers point to the toxic stress and negative mental health impact on children of immigrants.¹¹ It is estimated that in the U.S., 5.5 million U.S. born children live in households with at least one undocumented resident, including 1.8 million living in households with two undocumented parents.¹² Congress could exercise restraint by focusing enforcement funding on apprehending and detaining those who genuinely pose a threat to society, rather than targeting individuals like a father leading his family to worship service.

⁸ "Immigrant Communities in Hiding: 'People Think ICE Is Everywhere,'" New York Times, January 30, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/us/immigrant-communities-hiding-ice.html>

⁹ "MISSISSIPPI ICE RAIDS TWO YEARS LATER: INCREASED STRAINS AND SHRINKING HOPE: A Report by the Mississippi Center for Justice," Mississippi Center for Justice, 2021. <https://mscenterforjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ICE-Raids-2nd-Anniversary-Report-20210806.pdf>

¹⁰ "Immigrant Families Express Worry as They Prepare for Policy Changes," Urban Institute, March 12, 2025. https://www.urban.org/research/publication/immigrant-families-express-worry-they-prepare-policy-changes?utm_source=urban_ea&utm_medium=immigrants_and_immigration&utm_campaign=WBNS_2024_immigration&utm_term=immigrants_and_immigration&utm_content=urban_researcher

¹¹ "Living in an Immigrant Family in America: How Fear and Toxic Stress are Affecting Daily Life, Well-Being, & Health," KFF, December 13, 2017. <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/living-in-an-immigrant-family-in-america-how-fear-and-toxic-stress-are-affecting-daily-life-well-being-health/>

¹² "Proposed 2024 Mass Deportation Program Would Socially and Economically Devastate American Families," Center for Migration Studies, October 10, 2024. <https://cmsny.org/publications/2024-mass-deportation-program-devastate-american-families-101024/>

We urge you to consider the impact of heightened enforcement on religious communities as you consider immigration and border enforcement funding in the reconciliation package. With larger funds, immigration and border enforcement will continue to infringe on the human and constitutional rights of immigrants at a much larger scale and with less accountability. With larger funds, ICE raids will be more frequent, leading to a chilling effect that may leave more congregants feeling unsafe participating in worship services or turning to our congregations and organizations in times of need, undermining our role as key pillars of support in our communities. Spanning broad traditions, our sacred texts and traditions offer a clear and consistent call to love immigrants as our neighbors. We urge you to reject dramatically increasing funding for immigration enforcement and instead turn toward policies that strengthen our communities so we all can thrive.

Thank you for your consideration,

Adorers of the Blood of Christ US Region JPIC Office
Alliance of Baptists
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Benedictines for Peace
Benet Hill Monastery
Bernardine Franciscan Sisters
Chicago Korean American Sanctuary Church Network
Church World Service
Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership (CSPL)
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, USA
Daughters of Wisdom JPIC Office
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill
Dominican Sisters of Houston
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington DC
Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Faith In Action
Faith in Public Life
Faith in Public Life Action
First Congregational UCC of DC
Foundry UMC Sacred Resistance Team
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Peace Center, Clinton, Iowa
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC
Hope Border Institute
Immaculate Heart Community
Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center
Justice and Advocacy Ministries at Disciples Home Missions
Justice Committee Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Albany
Kino Border Initiative
Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America
Medical Mission Sisters, Unit North America
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
MPower Change Action Fund
Multifaith Initiative to End Mass Incarceration
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore
Pax Christi USA
Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness
Presentation Sisters San Francisco CA
Presentation Sisters Union - USA Unit
Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary - Eastern American Area
Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Western American Area
Religious Sisters of Charity
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic-Midwest Province
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province - Leadership Team
Servite Sisters Leadership Team
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation
Sisters of Charity of New York
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sisters of IHM Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Committee
Sisters of Mercy Justice Team
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur - Ohio Province
Sisters of Providence Office of Justice Promotion
Sisters of Saint Francis Rochester Minnesota
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia
Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia
Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston

Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester NY
Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield, MA
Sisters of the Humility of Mary
Sisters of the Presentation
Southern California Partners for Global Justice
Srs. of Christian Charity JPIC team
The Episcopal Church
The Festival Center
The Sisters of St Francis of Assisi
The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ
Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Wheaton Franciscan JPIC Office