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NEW DEMOCRAT COALITION

December 13, 2022

Hon. Rosa De Lauro
Chair
Appropriations Committee
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Chuck Fleischmann
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Fleischmann:

As you continue to finalize the appropriations package for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), I write to urge funding for federally run temporary emergency shelters to house migrants released from the custody of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and who are awaiting transportation to their final destinations as well as to support robust FEMA funding – all of which will help address the immediate needs on the border.

Over the last few months, the El Paso border sector has seen an extraordinarily high number of migrants arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border to seek asylum in the United States, with most days averaging 2,000 arrivals *per day* since June of this year. El Paso's central processing facility is consistently far beyond capacity, shelters have been bursting at the seams, and local governments have had to dip into their funds to prevent thousands of migrants from sleeping on the streets every night. Our community has been significantly strained as we are asked, once again, to step up and provide resources for what is inherently a federal function.

The situation in El Paso stopped being sustainable some time ago. Our County and City governments continue to perform functions outside their normal operations, while our local border patrol agents' capacity is being stressed beyond anything they have ever experienced. Our local Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are doing the best they can with limited space and resources, but routinely find their shelters full and unable to accommodate new arrivals once they are released from CBP custody. CBP has had to release vulnerable families, single adults, women, and children onto the streets of downtown El Paso for lack of space at the Central Processing Center and at our local shelters.

In the wake of a weekend that saw El Paso receive a record number of migrants, I am calling on the Committee on Appropriations to allot funding for federally run temporary emergency shelters

for migrants released from CBP custody as they await transportation out of El Paso. A vast majority of migrants who arrive in El Paso intend to move on to other parts of the country – largely to connect with sponsors already in the United States as they await their asylum hearings – and spend very little time in El Paso between being released from custody and moving on from the city. The federal government has the capacity to stand up temporary noncustodial facilities, staffed by federal employees, to house migrants for less than 48 hours while they wait for transportation to their destinations.

While Congress and this administration must work toward sustainable long-term goals, in the short-term, I am asking for more resources to support communities like El Paso. Rather than continue to expect communities to shoulder the brunt of this task alone, the federal government must act to stand up its own short-term emergency shelters for those migrants who have been released from custody but need a place to stay before they are able to leave town.

Additionally, we must maintain robust FEMA funding for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) in order to continue to reimburse local governments and NGOs for their support work and expenses, and to ensure that as they assist the federal government, they have the resources to prevent ongoing humanitarian crises.

And finally, I urge the Committee to appropriate additional funding for and to consider El Paso a recipient for Joint Processing Center funding in FY23. Our community has been and will continue to be one of the border's busiest sectors and requires the investment that comes with that significant responsibility.

Thank you for your consideration of my request as you finalize the final FY23 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress