

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 24, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
2006 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Colleagues,

As you continue working on a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) supplemental appropriations bill, we urge you to increase Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), State and Local Programs, accounts for each Southwest border state that has been experiencing a high influx of migrants seeking asylum at the border. Furthermore, we respectfully request you include a legislative provision that would allow for these funds to be used to reimburse local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have incurred costs while providing humanitarian relief at the border.

As you know, the southwest border is experiencing unprecedented levels of migration composed mostly of family units and unaccompanied children. In March, U.S. Border Patrol began releasing non-criminal, processed family units on their own recognizance into border communities in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. To date, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has released over 40,000 family unit individuals.

In certain areas along the border, DHS has released groups of several hundred individuals without notice to NGOs or local governments. This places an enormous strain on border communities and forces them to hastily create makeshift shelters, round up volunteers and emergency aid, and assist migrants coordinate travel plans to their destinations.

We believe local communities should not have to bear the brunt of flawed policies at the border and must be fairly compensated for their humane response to an issue that should be shouldered by federal agencies.

Reimbursement to communities for the provision of humanitarian assistance to migrants at the border is not unprecedented. After the surge of unaccompanied children in 2014, Congress included a provision in the fiscal year 2015 DHS appropriations bill that allowed funds in the

FEMA, State and Local Programs, accounts to be used for reimbursement of costs related to humanitarian relief.

Now, we ask Congressional and Appropriations Committee leaders to once again include this authority in a DHS supplemental appropriations bill, along with increased funding to border states, to give our border communities the deserved relief they desperately need.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Henry Cuellar, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Xochitl Torres Small
Member of Congress



Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



Vicente González
Member of Congress



Will Hurd
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress