



February 24, 2026

Dear Senator/Representative:

May the peace of Christ be with you.

As Congress continues to negotiate on Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, we write on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee for Religious Liberty and Committee on Migration to share our views on several issues impacting the life of our nation at the intersection of immigration enforcement and religious liberty. In doing so, we supplement the USCCB's previous engagement with Congress on [migration-related appropriations](#) and [other timely issues of importance](#) to the Catholic Church.¹ Above all, we offer our perspectives as pastors devoted to upholding the Gospel of Life and as citizens deeply committed to our country's founding principles.

We recognize the legitimate role of immigration enforcement as one aspect of furthering the common good. Together with our brother bishops from across the nation, we affirmed as much in our [special pastoral message](#) last November, in which we prayed collectively for “an end to dehumanizing rhetoric and violence, whether directed at immigrants or at law enforcement.”² At the same time, the Church's social doctrine makes clear, “whenever public authority—which has its foundation in human nature and belongs to the order pre-ordained by God—fails to seek the common good, it abandons its proper purpose and so delegitimizes itself.”³

In recent months, the approach to implementing our country's immigration laws and its impact on communities have led the USCCB to [express concern and call for reconciliation](#).⁴ Across Republican and Democratic administrations alike, the USCCB has repeatedly opposed an “enforcement-only approach” to immigration, while maintaining that enforcement efforts should always be **targeted, proportionate, and humane, with respect for human dignity and the sanctity of families serving as key measures of their validity**.

In the Committee for Religious Liberty's [2026 Annual Report on the State of Religious Liberty in the United States](#),⁵ we recognized several areas of critical concern, both challenges and opportunities. One such area of concern is the convergence of immigration enforcement and

¹ USCCB Letter to Congress on Migration-Related Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2026 (Aug. 28, 2025), <https://www.usccb.org/resources/USCCB%20Letter%20to%20Congress%20on%20Migration-Related%20Appropriations%20for%20FY%202026.pdf>; USCCB Letter to Congress on Nonprofit Security Grant Program Funding for Fiscal Year 2026 (Jun 12, 2025), https://www.usccb.org/resources/Approps_Letter_NSQP_June_12_2025.pdf.

² Press Release, USCCB, U.S. Bishops Issue a “Special Message” on Immigration from Plenary Assembly in Baltimore (Nov. 12, 2025), <https://www.usccb.org/news/2025/us-bishops-issue-special-message-immigration-plenary-assembly-baltimore>.

³ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2005), no. 398.

⁴ See, e.g., Press Release, USCCB, Archbishop Coakley Calls for Holy Hour as a Moment of Renewal for Our Hearts and Our Nation (Jan. 28, 2026), <https://www.usccb.org/news/2026/archbishop-coakley-calls-holy-hour-moment-renewal-our-hearts-and-our-nation>.

⁵ *The State of Religious Liberty in the United States: Annual Report of the Committee for Religious Liberty* (Feb. 17, 2026), <https://www.usccb.org/religious-liberty/2026-annual-report>.

religious exercise—particularly, enforcement at houses of worship and a lack of access to religious and pastoral services for those in immigration detention. As the report conveys, the fear and human impact from the Administration’s rescission of longstanding enforcement guidelines for protected areas has harmed Catholic parishes and worshippers.⁶ Meanwhile, the rapid growth of immigration detention and systemic issues related to inconsistent policies and procedures across facilities have unjustly deprived detainees and people seeking to minister to them of their religious liberty.

It is critical that, as conversations occur about ways to reform our immigration laws and policies, which we agree are desperately needed, the fundamental guarantee of religious liberty be upheld for all people. This must include our immigrant brothers and sisters, regardless of legal status, and those who serve them in accordance with their deeply held beliefs. Therefore, we urge Congress to work on a bipartisan basis to demonstrate its support for religious liberty by:

1. **Ensuring respect for what are commonly referred to as sensitive locations, especially houses of worship, such that immigration enforcement efforts are avoided at or near these locations, absent exigent circumstances; and**
2. **Mandating consistent access to religious and pastoral services for all immigration detainees, subject only to reasonable limitations based on clear guidelines and uniform processes, regardless of a detention facility’s operator.**

Adopting sensible measures such as these do not erode the rule of law or undermine the integrity of our immigration system; to the contrary, they align the law more closely with the moral order.

Those entrusted with enforcing our laws at all levels of government have difficult and complex roles, which can sometimes put their own lives and well-being at risk. The Church counts many of them among her faithful members. Acknowledging this reality, we recall the words of Pope Saint John Paul II as guiding principles for all charged with the responsibility of law enforcement: **high moral standards, discipline, self-sacrifice, and genuine concern for the common good.**⁷

Through these principles, the true purpose of the law enforcement profession is revealed—to serve and to protect with “a profound sense of the unique dignity of every human being.”⁸

Respectfully,



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Archbishop of Portland
Chairman, USCCB Committee for
Religious Liberty



Most Reverend Brendan J. Cahill
Bishop of Victoria
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration

⁶ See also Brief of the USCCB in Support of Plaintiffs-Appellants, *Mennonite Church USA v. DHS*, No. 25-5209 (D.C. Cir. Sept. 29, 2025), available at <https://www.usccb.org/resources/25-5209%20USCCB%20Amicus%20Brief%20Supporting%20Appellants.pdf>.

⁷ John Paul II, Address to the Representatives of the Catholic Police Officers of England and Wales (April 12, 1985), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1985/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19850412_ufficiali-polizia.html.

⁸ *Id.*