



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG

September 11, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

We write on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committees on Domestic Justice and Human Development, International Justice and Peace, and Migration, to express our views on the Biden Administration's August 10, 2023, request for emergency Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 supplemental funding, as well as our views on several items in the Administration's subsequent FY 2024 continuing resolution anomalies request.

We wish to underscore our deep concern about calls by some Members of Congress to condition enactment of any supplemental, continuing, or regular fiscal year 2024 funding bill on the inclusion of a number of extraneous policy provisions for which there is no precedent in the appropriations process, such as those contained in the Secure the Border Act of 2023 (H.R. 2), a divisive border and immigration bill that the House narrowly passed earlier this year. We believe that such provisions would severely weaken humanitarian protections long enshrined in U.S. and international law. Catholic social teaching clearly recognizes a country's right to secure its borders in accordance with the common good. However, the USCCB opposes measures that seriously contradict our nation's fundamental commitment to humanitarian protection, especially those that would undermine protection for the sanctity of human life. We urge Congress to reject their inclusion here.

With regard to the Administration's requests, we offer the following recommendations:

Enforcement of Child Labor Laws and Protection of Migrant Children. As one actor among many in the fight against child exploitation, the Catholic Church remains committed to serving our nation's children and those who come to our country seeking a better life. Consistent with our longstanding support for unaccompanied migrant children, and related efforts to counter child exploitation, including the evil of human trafficking, we affirm the Administration's request of \$100 million in supplemental funding for the Department of Labor to enforce child labor laws and protect migrant children from dangerous and exploitative labor arrangements. In addition to efforts currently underway by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to enhance policies and procedures for safeguarding noncitizen children, the Department of Labor has an indispensable role in investigating and

enforcing penalties against those who subject children of any immigration status to illegal and harmful labor situations.

Refugee Resettlement. We are grateful for the \$1.9 billion and \$100 million in funding requested by the Administration in its anomaly and supplemental requests, respectively, for ORR's Refugee and Entrant Assistance account to sustain integration and support services for displaced Ukrainians, Cuban/Haitian entrants, unaccompanied children, and other vulnerable newcomers authorized by Congress to receive such assistance. To accompany these funding amounts, we reiterate the pressing need for Congress to extend authorization for ORR-funded services to Ukrainians and Afghans who arrive in the United States with humanitarian parole after September 30, 2023.

Domestic Assistance. We urge Congress to support robust assistance to those impacted by disasters and catastrophic events, especially those who are most vulnerable. Additionally, we support the anomaly requests for rural housing rental assistance, the Commodities Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) in order for these critical programs to continue meeting basic nutrition and housing needs. It is especially important to address WIC funding to ensure all mothers, infants, and young children in need have access to life-saving nutrition and health services. Ensuring the WIC program is strong and effective is vital to building a truly life-affirming society.

International Assistance. We are also grateful for the Administration's supplemental funding requests of \$1.3 billion for the Department of State's International Disaster Assistance account and \$1.232 billion for its Migration and Refugee Assistance account, split between continued support of those displaced or otherwise impacted by the devastating war in Ukraine and humanitarian needs in the Western Hemisphere, primarily the operation of Safe Mobility Offices. Similarly, we welcome the Administration's separate funding requests for Diplomatic Programs (\$26 million) and the Economic Support Fund (\$250 million) to address migration in our hemisphere. As our country more fully recognizes and responds to forced displacement as a regional and global phenomenon this funding will allow the State Department to sustainably and equitably expand Western Hemisphere initiatives without adversely impacting resettlement efforts and international assistance in other parts of the world. At the same time, we urge robust oversight by Congress to ensure these funds are not used in ways that undermine human rights as presently defined under binding human rights treaties and customary international law.

Humanitarian Assistance to Ukraine. We appreciate efforts to provide additional humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and other countries impacted by the war in Ukraine, especially food and safe drinking water. Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative has greatly heightened global food security concerns, increasing food prices, and jeopardizing the health and lives of poor and vulnerable people dependent on food assistance for survival.

Shelter and Services Program. We welcome the Administration's requested \$600 million in supplemental funding to support the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Shelter and Services Program (SSP). SSP is an important means for continuing the public-private partnership that has existed in various forms between civil society and DHS since it was established two decades ago. However, we are troubled by the Administration's proposal of a residential facilities program that potentially includes overly restrictive conditions on enrollees, limiting the ability of many nonprofit organizations to support its implementation in good conscience. Maintaining our general opposition to family detention as an unjustified and immoral practice, we urge Congress and the Administration to promote alternatives to detention that respect the agency and God-given dignity of all newcomers, accompanied by robust oversight mechanisms.

Other Needs. We also welcome the Administration's request of \$36 million in supplemental funding for the Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review to support the hiring of additional immigration judge teams, but noticeably absent from both requests is funding for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). It is vital that Congress continue to support USCIS through direct appropriations, including supplemental and anomaly funding as required. Whenever Congress appropriates funding in response to humanitarian and other migration-related needs, such as those addressed in the Administration's requests, it must also recognize the integral role of USCIS and support its expanded operations accordingly, rather than expecting newcomers and their sponsors to shoulder increased operation costs through excessive fee hikes.

Thank you for your consideration.

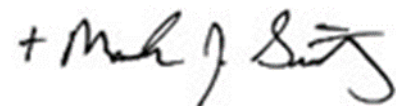
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Borys Gudziak".

Most Reverend Borys Gudziak
Archbishop of Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ David J. Malloy".

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Mark J. Seitz".

Most Reverend Mark J. Seitz
Bishop of El Paso
Chairman, Committee on Migration