

April 18, 2023

Committee on the Judiciary,
House of Representatives,
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Statement Opposing House Judiciary Markup of H.R. 2640 Border Security and Enforcement Act of 2023

Dear Representatives,

On behalf of Catholic organizations that work with immigrants and asylum seekers - NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, Hope Border Institute, Kino Border Initiative, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas-Justice Team, Quixote Center, Franciscan Action Network, Jesuit Refugee Service-USA, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Francis Action Network for Migrants-USA, St. Columban Mission for Justice Peace and Ecology, Pax Christi -USA, we write in **strong opposition to H.R. 2640 Border Security and Enforcement Act of 2023**, that the House Judiciary Committee will mark up on April 19th. We oppose this bill because it will harm immigrant communities and goes against our Catholic principles of welcome.

We particularly oppose the sections of the bill that would:

1. Make significant changes to our asylum system, making it nearly impossible for migrants to seek asylum in the U.S. and significantly easier to deport asylum seekers, including families and children into harm's way;
2. Restart the failed and dangerous Remain in Mexico program for all migrants, including unaccompanied children;
3. Require family detention for any families attempting to enter the U.S. to seek asylum, as well as any families who previously entered the U.S. without visas;
4. Subject all unaccompanied children to an expedited removal process, harming children, particularly those in danger of trafficking;

The U.S. must move away from policies that cause harm to immigrants. There is a direct link between current U.S. border policies and practices and the horrific deaths of 40 people detained at the immigration center in Ciudad Juárez. The recent expansions of Title 42 alongside the inability to schedule an exemption appointment through CBP One has forced asylum seekers to remain in cities like Ciudad Juárez, which are dangerous and which do not have the capacity to provide adequate housing and services for those who need it. In the last three months, we have observed an increase in abuse, extortion and arbitrary detention by the Mexican authorities at locations where individuals have found shelter, even including churches.

For the last 30 years the U.S. government has approached the border from a [policy framework of deterrence](#) and this model has spread not only to Mexico but worldwide. Nonetheless, this approach has not resulted in a safe and secure border but instead has only brought pain and suffering upon the most vulnerable.

The policies of deterrence have also led to the militarization of border communities in the U.S. where the very same enforcement agents who are charged with keeping our communities safe are now viewed as

potential threats. The abuse of power by U.S. law enforcement has resulted in the loss of lives and countless other sufferings under a system that views black, brown, and indigenous individuals at our southern border with fear, regardless of immigration status.

Pope Francis has said, "the sin is to allow these fears to determine our responses, to limit our choices, to compromise respect and generosity, to feed hostility and rejection. The sin is to refuse to encounter the other, to encounter the different, to encounter the neighbor, when this is in fact a privileged opportunity to encounter the Lord."

This bill will simply continue to harm immigrants and create divisions in our communities and our country without providing any solutions. We pray that the House Judiciary Committee will move away from such divisions and take this time to support immigration policy that is modeled on a system of encounter and reception rather than continuing on a path focused on deterrence.

SIGNED.

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Hope Border Institute
Kino Border Initiative
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
Quixote Center
Franciscan Action Network,
Jesuit Refugee Service - USA
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns,
Francis Action Network for Migrants - USA
St. Columban Mission for Justice Peace and Ecology
Pax Christi - USA