

December 28, 2018

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Leaders Schumer and Pelosi:

We write as immigrants' rights, environmental, labor, faith, and progressive organizations to thank you for standing firm against what Leader Pelosi accurately calls President Trump's "immoral, expensive and ineffective wall." We are concerned, however, by both Democratic proposals to reopen the government, which you have described as not "includ[ing] funding for the wall," because these proposals would continue full-year spending levels from March 2018's DHS budget that contained \$1.375 billion for border barrier construction. Past expenditures on construction have already caused -- and continue to threaten -- significant harm to border communities, damage that would be severely compounded by extending last year's DHS budget in its current form. We also oppose a full-year continuing resolution's potential forgiveness of DHS's out-of-control detention spending as well as abuses of transfer and reprogramming authority, rogue behavior that must be confronted not condoned.

Acting White House Chief of Staff Mulvaney emphasized last weekend that "what one people [*sic*] call a wall ... another person might call a fence." The President added on Tuesday: "I can tell you [the government's] not going to be open until we have a wall, a fence, whatever they'd like to call it. I'll call it whatever they want. But it's all the same thing. It's a barrier from people pouring into our country." What matters is not fence/wall word games, but the impact of this construction on border environments and wildlife, the taking of private property, and increased flooding danger, to mention only three deleterious effects caused in large part by a complete waiver of laws to expedite barrier building. Less money is of course better than Trump's demand for \$5 billion, but the harms caused by your proposed funding as compared to his are just as real, divisive, and damaging. In short, a continuing resolution that includes \$1.375 billion for border barrier construction clearly funds Trump's wall project and must be rejected.

We firmly believe that the next Congress should decide DHS's budget. Indeed, that is why many of the undersigned groups wrote you on November 13, 2018, to advocate for a short-term continuing resolution into the next Congress, underscoring the need for Members to

cut DHS's enforcement budget for deportation agents and detention beds. With a new House majority, robust oversight will occur over past border-security spending, which DHS is more than three months overdue in reporting on to Congress. A discussion about effective and humane border policy can inform funding decisions and proceed in a fiscally responsible and evidence-based manner at a time when 60% of apprehended unauthorized border crossers turn themselves in to seek asylum; ports of entry that are failing to promptly process asylum seekers badly need modernization; and border stakeholders deserve to be heard rather than sacrificed to the administration's false rhetoric of fear and violence. Even Customs and Border Protection's Commissioner has identified spending priorities that are evidently far more deserving than wall construction, including a \$4 billion deficit in improvements to ports of entry and funding to replace the incarceration of children and families in Border Patrol stations.

The Trump shutdown is deeply unfair to hundreds of thousands of federal employees and contractors; it is a disgrace that the president chose to inflict distress on them and their families. As much as we all desire an end to the shutdown, however, rewarding Trump's DHS with border barrier money is the wrong course of action, especially at a time when its personnel are tear gassing toddlers, separating and detaining families, and presiding over custodial deaths, including those of a 7-year-old girl named Jakelin and an 8-year-old boy named Felipe in Border Patrol custody just this month. The midterm elections clearly demonstrated that the American public rejects Trump's hateful, xenophobic agenda: Congress must honor this mandate and remember his policies' casualties instead of validating his repudiated actions.

Our groups are united in a moment of power, standing in solidarity with border communities forced in recent years to endure erosions of their quality of life by bearing the ill effects of border-security funding. Now is the time to truly say NO to Trump's wall: no to \$5 billion, no to \$2.1 billion, no to \$1.6 billion, no to \$1.375 billion. And to reject any additional funding for detention beds, ICE and Border Patrol agents, or other harmful enforcement. The Senate last week unanimously passed a short-term continuing resolution until February: that is the right way to end this Trump shutdown. Polls consistently show that a supermajority of the country opposes funding any of Trump's wall: please heed their views and spare our unique borderlands further devastation by zeroing out his barrier obsession.

Thank you for your consideration. Respectfully submitted,

Aldea - The People's Justice Center

Alliance4Action Immigration Team

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

American Civil Liberties Union

American Friends Service Committee

Arab American Association of New York

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence

ASISTA

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Black Immigrant Collective

Border Patrol Victims Network

Bridges Across Borders

CAIR Georgia

CAIR San Francisco Bay Area

CASA

Center for Biological Diversity

Church World Service

Columbia Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic

Conference of Superiors of Men (Catholic)

Congregation of Our Lady of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces

CREDO

Defenders of Wildlife

Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families

Detention Watch Network

Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries

Down To The Wire

Earthjustice

Endangered Species Coalition

Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)

Freedom for Immigrants

Friends of Friendship Park

Frontera de Cristo

Government Information Watch

Green Science Policy Institute

GreenLatinos

Immigrant Defense Project

Immigrant Legal Resource Center

Imperial Beach United Methodist Church

Indivisible

International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute

Justice Strategies

La Union del Pueblo Entero

Make the Road New York

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Council of Jewish Women

National Immigrant Justice Center

National Immigration Law Center

National Justice for Our Neighbors

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

New York Immigration Coalition

No More Deaths

Northern Borders Coalition

Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors

Northern Jaguar Project

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

NY4WHALES

OneAmerica

PFLAG National

Poligon Education Fund

Rachel's Network

Rio Grande Valley Equal Voice Network

Sanctuary DMV

Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community

South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)

Southern Border Communities Coalition

Southwest Environmental Center

The Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project

The Green Valley/Sahuarita Samaritans

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Tucson Samaritans

UndocuBlack Network

United We Dream

Western Watersheds Project

Wildlands Network