

May 10, 2023

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Catholic Organization Vote Recommendation Opposing H.R. 2 Secure the Border Act of 2023

Dear Representative,

We, the undersigned Catholic organizations that serve immigrants and asylum seekers - respectfully ask you to **VOTE NO on H.R. 2 Secure the Border Act of 2023**. We oppose this bill because it will criminalize immigrant children and their families, and it will harm faith based organizations and our ability to serve our communities.

We oppose the entirety of the bill but in particular the sections that:

Undermine Essential Partnerships with Catholic Care and Respite Centers. The bill would bar any and all DHS funding for NGOs, including faith-based NGOs, that provide shelter, transportation, food or legal assistance to vulnerable immigrants, including those who arrive on a visa and later become “inadmissible.” This measure would not only impact Catholic organizations at the border but Catholic organizations across the country that receive DHS funding, including organizations working with FEMA during an emergency.

Deport Unaccompanied Children. The bill would end Health & Human Services funding for legal representation of unaccompanied children in immigration proceedings, depriving children of the attorneys their safety depends upon. It would also provide only a cursory screening process for children at the border, risking children’s summary return to human trafficking and other dangers. The bill subjects all unaccompanied children to an accelerated removal process worse than what currently exists, and allows for detention of unaccompanied children in jail-like border facilities for up to 30 days—ten times longer than permitted under current law.

Eliminate Parole Authority. The bill would decimate the parole power that presidents historically have used to parole individuals in response to humanitarian emergencies or in furtherance of foreign policy objectives. It also impedes the President’s recent parole programs for Ukrainians, Afghans, Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans that many Catholic congregations and churches support and cuts work authorization for parolees.

For decades Catholic organizations, dioceses and congregations have partnered with federal and state governments regardless of political party, to provide succor to all in need, especially our immigrant siblings. This bill will jeopardize those successful partnerships that have supported immigrant communities both at the border and in the interior, partnerships that have proved to save lives. The Secure the Border Act will affect the day-to-day operations of Catholic shelter, respite and care centers because we believe in the dignity and sanctity of life and therefore our

faith does not allow us to deny food and shelter to people simply because they do not have the right papers. The Bible tells us;

“Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” James 2:15-17

This bill will harm both immigrants and the communities who receive them. This bill will lead to further deaths and suffering of people who, we are bound by our faith to support, in order that everyone can live in dignity. Finally, this bill will also hurt us - Catholics who want to live and practice our faith while following the law.

For the last 30 years, the U.S. government has approached the border from a [policy framework of deterrence](#). This approach has not resulted in a safe and secure border but instead has brought more militarization to the border communities and inflicted pain and suffering upon the most vulnerable.

We urge you to vote in ways that protect immigrants and **VOTE NO** on **H.R. 2 Secure the Border Act of 2023** in the upcoming floor vote. We must oppose racist, xenophobic, unconstructive proposals that add fuel to hate and present no constructive and moral solutions.

SIGNED.

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