

REFUGEE COUNCIL USA

February 7, 2024

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
Hart Senate Office Building, 322
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
Russell Senate Office Building, 317
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell,

We write today as the undersigned members of Refugee Council USA – a coalition of organizations leading in the humanitarian protection field as service providers, policy experts, and advocates – to express our strong opposition to the anti-asylum, anti-border policies contained in the supplemental [funding bill](#) released on February 4, 2024. The United States has long served as a global leader in humanitarian protection, offering protection and opportunity for those who have been forced to flee their homes due to violence and persecution. How our national leaders respond in this moment will not only determine the trajectory of our country's humanitarian policies, but will have massive influence on – and consequences for – national and global security, as well as our foreign policy and diplomatic priorities.

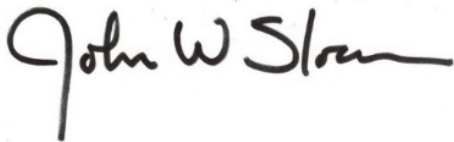
While we appreciate the bipartisan spirit behind this bill, the asylum restrictions included in this legislation would exacerbate humanitarian and operational challenges at the border and raise obstacles that severely restrict the right to seek permanent protection. This legislation would codify and expand sweeping Title 42-style border expulsions, raise the credible fear standard (thereby turning away bona fide asylum seekers), and undermine asylum seekers' opportunity to be heard in court. By unlawfully turning away asylum seekers, this bill would force them to return to the violence and persecution they fled, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse and violating the principle of non-refoulement.

We urge all Members of Congress and the Biden administration to respond to the growing displacement crisis with compassion and meaningful solutions that advance our global security, foreign policy, and economic priorities. We have a moral and legal responsibility to advance policies that uphold the rights and dignity of all people, regardless of their nationality or immigration status. As the reasons for global displacement grow more complex, so must our solutions. When addressing protection needs, we must lead with clear and accessible processes that uphold international refugee law and respond to the factors forcing individuals to flee from their countries of origin. Where the US leads, others follow, and it is imperative that we set an example by crafting solutions that preserve the humanity and dignity of people seeking safety.

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Our organizations have been working alongside policymakers and affected communities to find truly humane and effective solutions. We do find favorable elements in this legislation, including measures to provide legal representation for unaccompanied children, a pathway to permanent status for Afghan evacuees, and increased funding to humanitarian accounts to support forcibly displaced people and resettled refugees. But we should not trade off protections for some vulnerable populations at the expense of others. And the bill's positives do not outweigh the extreme harm that would occur should its anti-asylum measures become law. RCUSA continues to call for [needed supplemental funding and policy reforms](#) that would infuse a compassionate approach and real solutions into these budget negotiations.

Sincerely,



John Slocum
Executive Director, RCUSA



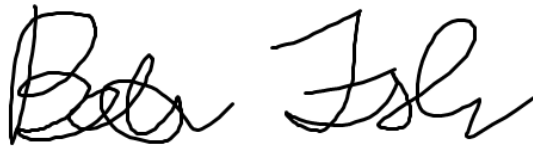
Eleanor Acer
Senior Director, Refugee Protection, Human Rights First



Sharif Aly
President, IRAP



Tawnya Brown
Senior Vice President of Operational Strategy, Bethany Christian Services



Betsy Fisher
US Director, Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB)



Mark Hetfield
President & CEO, HIAS

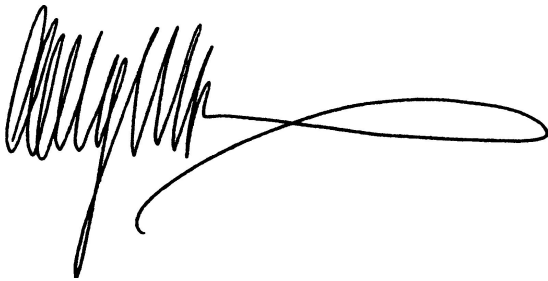


Sarah Ivory
Executive Director, USAHello

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Jeremy Konyndyk
President, Refugees International



Abby Maxman
President & CEO, Oxfam America



Nicole Melaku
Executive Director, NPNA



Eskinder Negash
President & CEO, USCRI

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Annie Nolte-Henning
Executive Director, Community Sponsorship Hub



Kimahli Powell
CEO, Rainbow Railroad



Scott Roehm
Director of Global Policy and Advocacy, Center for Victims of Torture



Joan Rosenhauer
President, Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Russell'.

Mario Russell
Executive Director, Center for Migration Studies NY

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Richard L. Santos
President & CEO, Church World Service

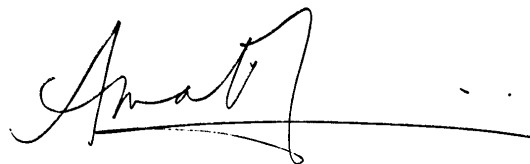
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ahmed Shehata'.

Ahmed Shehata
CEO, Islamic Relief USA

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Tsehaye Teferra
President and CEO, ECDC

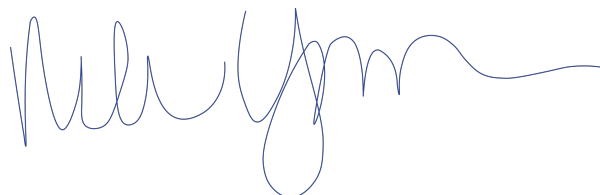
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Amali Tower
Founder & Executive Director, Climate Refugees

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jocelyn Wyatt", with a large, stylized flourish on the right side.

Jocelyn Wyatt
CEO, Alight

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nili Sarit Yossinger", with a long, wavy horizontal line extending to the right.

Nili Sarit Yossinger
Executive Director, Refugee Congress