



CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS

Joaquin Castro | Chairman

116TH CONGRESS

February 24, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf,

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) requests a meeting with you at your earliest convenience. On April 4th, 2019, the CHC confirmed a meeting with then-Secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen M. Nielsen, then Acting Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Ronald D. Vitiello, and then-Commissioner for U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Kevin K. McAleenan for May 23rd, 2019 on Capitol Hill. However, the meeting on May 23rd did not occur due to the resignation of key Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials. The CHC followed up with the agency to maintain our scheduled meeting with then-Acting Secretary of DHS, Kevin K. McAleenan, Acting Director of ICE, Matthew T. Albence, and the senior official performing the functions and duties of the Commissioner of CBP, John P. Sanders. Our request was never fulfilled despite various attempts to secure a meeting. Last Congress, the CHC met with then-Secretary of Homeland Security, John Kelly, who committed to meeting with the CHC every six weeks; either with him or other high-level DHS agency officials. During Mr. Kelly's tenure as Secretary of Homeland Security, he met with the CHC on two different occasions: on April 4, 2017 and July 12, 2017. He continued his relationship with the CHC as the White House Chief of Staff by meeting with the Caucus on January 17, 2018. The CHC also met with then-Secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen M. Nielsen on July 25, 2018. Since meeting with Ms. Nielsen in 2018, the CHC has submitted multiple meeting requests, but DHS has not confirmed any meetings with our Caucus. We sincerely hope that you continue the precedent set by previous DHS leadership of meeting with the CHC so we can together discuss the direction of the agency and how the course of DHS impacts our constituents.

The CHC has been on the record calling for the termination of various policies implemented by DHS. This ranges from family separation, which was enacted while you were Chief of Staff to Secretary Nielsen; Remain in Mexico, otherwise known as Migrant Protections Protocols (MPP); expansion of "safe third country" agreements; the use of border patrol agents to conduct credible-fear interviews; the creation of "tent courts" at the border, and; zealous building of the border wall. Moreover, the CHC remains gravely concerned by the amount of migrant deaths occurring in DHS custody and the agency's fiscal management. Under this Administration, 35 adults have died in ICE custody and in the last two years 7 children have died in DHS custody or shortly after DHS discharge. Furthermore, DHS has received record levels of resources from Congress, which has been followed by several funding transfers that has stunted the mission of other agencies and

disadvantaged districts across the country. Moving forward, we hope to work with you in ensuring that the funding Congress appropriates is used to provide adequate care for migrants and advance an asylum system that provides relief to those who are lawfully entitled to it.

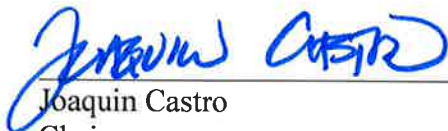
Under your leadership, DHS has fortified its strategy to block migration from reaching the southern U.S. border and effectively foreclose asylum. The Prompt Asylum Claim Review program and the Humanitarian Asylum Review Process unjustly rushes asylum seekers through the credible fear process while impeding them from gaining meaningful counsel – ultimately returning them back to dangerous conditions. We are also increasingly troubled by the Asylum Compact Agreements DHS is executing with countries that are notoriously unsafe for vulnerable asylum seekers like Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. There are serious concerns about these countries' capacity to economically and socially integrate any substantial number of asylum seekers. Furthermore, our position remains that these agreements fail to meet the criteria of requisite statutes governing a Safe Third Country designation.

The CHC is a 38-member Caucus that represents millions of individuals living along the border and communities across the country who are immediately impacted by the policies and strategy driven by DHS. We are eager to meet with you and personally relay our concerns while hoping to find a way to work together to preserve the asylum system, dedicate resources to reducing detention, institute policies that keep families together, and uphold the U.S. as a global leader on migration policy.

Please let us know the dates and times that work for you in the coming days to allow for our members to meet with you.

Thank you for your attention to this immediate matter.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro
Chair
Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Second Vice Chair
Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Veronica Escobar
Freshman Representative
Congressional Hispanic Caucus



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