April 26, 2022

Dear Members of Congress,

As 103 faith-based organizations and 215 faith leaders across traditions, we are called to love and welcome our neighbors. The U.S.’ promise to provide refuge and freedom from persecution is firmly written into our nation’s asylum laws. We write to strongly urge you to uphold our asylum laws and vote NO on any proposal that would limit or undermine access to asylum. Of immediate concern is the Public Health and Border Security Act of 2022 (S. 4036/H.R. 7458), an anti-asylum bill recently introduced in the Senate and in the House of Representatives. This bill raises the threshold to rescind the public health authority known as Title 42 to an impossible standard. Maintaining Title 42 amounts to more suffering for asylum seekers patiently waiting their chance to legally ask for protection. We believe it is possible to safely and humanely receive asylum seekers while safeguarding public health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), public health experts, southern border communities from Arizona, California, Texas, and advocates have reached similar conclusions. Lawmakers have a moral imperative to oppose this legislation and any anti-asylum proposal that would keep Title 42 in place.

On April 1st, the faith community welcomed the Biden administration’s announcement to terminate Title 42 by May 23rd, and made it clear we stand ready to welcome those seeking refuge. We also reiterated our commitment to work together to rebuild a just and humane asylum system. Alongside faith leaders, asylum seekers, public health experts, and advocates, we have consistently urged the Biden administration to put an end to Title 42, and other inhumane, asylum-blocking policies, and to restore a humane and just asylum system built on the values of hospitality and welcome, with due process and without discrimination. Misused under the false pretense of public health, the Title 42 policy has resulted in over 1.7 million expulsions of vulnerable individuals seeking refuge at the U.S. southern border, in contravention of U.S. law and international obligations. Title 42 is damaging to the nation's international standing and individuals.

There are severe physical and mental health consequences for asylum seekers expelled under the policy, particularly for children, families, and minorities. Title 42 has fueled a humanitarian crisis; since President Biden took office, there have been at least 9,866 reports of violent attacks - including rape, kidnap, and assault - against people blocked from requesting protection at the U.S.-Mexico border and/or expelled to Mexico under Title 42, as tracked by Human Rights First. It has also been used disparately to expel Black migrants, in particular Haitians, back to a country ill-prepared to support their safe return and reintegration. Additionally, Title 42 has increased the likelihood of repeat crossings. A June 2021 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) acknowledged that Title 42 expulsions have led to “some individuals trying to cross the border multiple times per day.” In total, the rate at which people crossed the border multiple times rose from 7% in March 2020 to 40% by October 2020 while Title 42 was in place, before leveling to an annual rate of 27% in 2021. This legislation would put displaced and vulnerable populations like Ukrainians, Afghans, Venezuelans, and others at risk. If this bill passes, people fleeing violence and persecution would continue to be forcibly removed from the U.S. without access to protection and returned to life-threatening and dangerous conditions.

We must facilitate the humane and safe reception of people seeking refuge in the United States in compliance with U.S. law and treaty obligations. Rescinding Title 42 restores basic asylum processing at ports of entry, meaning those who request asylum will be processed into the country so they can pursue their case; those who don’t request asylum or who are found not to have a valid claim to protection move through removal proceedings, in accordance with standing asylum law.

The Public Health and Border Security Act of 2022 ignores individuals and families in desperate need of safety and their right to seek protection from persecution. It is especially disappointing that the release of urgently needed funding for COVID testing, treatment, vaccines, and relief has been interrupted by a potential action on the Public Health and Border Security Act of 2022. Lawmakers should not insist on including this bill as a harmful amendment to the COVID-19 supplemental which is urgently needed for COVID-19 mitigation abroad and for domestic needs. Politicizing Title 42 is harmful to asylum seekers and communities at home. We urge you to depoliticize and decouple Title 42 and COVID-19 aid and
legislate on the common good. The promise of working toward the common good has delivered us through the pandemic and can lead us to a better future where we welcome with dignity.

Our faith traditions call us to welcome vulnerable people with warmth and open arms, and we call on members of Congress to do the same. We urge you to fiercely reject this dangerous bill, oppose similar measures, and hold the Biden administration accountable to ending this policy once and for all by May 23rd. As people of faith, we are ready and eager to welcome all people with dignity and urge you to work with the administration to support a comprehensive and clearly-communicated plan to build an equitable, humane, and anti-racist asylum system.

Sincerely,

Faith Organizations
Accompaniment & Sanctuary Coalition Colorado Springs
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
Associate, Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, St. Francis Province
Bethany House of Hospitality
Bridges Faith Initiative
Bright Way Zen
Catholic Coalition for Migrants and Immigrants
Central Washington Justice For Our Neighbors
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
Church Council of Greater Seattle
Church Women United in New York State
Church World Service
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Boston
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Creator Lutheran & SE Portland Youth Collective
Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Dominican Sisters of Houston
Edgewood United UCC Racial Justice Team
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Faith Commons
Fellowship Southwest
First Parish in Concord, MA Immigration Justice Task Force
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Sisters of Allegany
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Green Valley/Sahuarita Samaritans
Guadalupe Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)
HIAS
Immaculate Heart Community, Commission on Justice for Immigrants & Refugees
Immigration Task Force, Fauntleroy Church
Immigration Task Force, New England Synod, ELCA
Interfaith Campaign for Just Closures
Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service
Interfaith Welcome Coalition-San Antonio
InterReligious Task Force on Central America
Jemez Peacemakers
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Justice For Our Neighbors-North Central Texas
Justice for Our Neighbors El Paso
Kino Border Initiative
Lawrence Interfaith Refugee and Immigrant Ministry, Lawrence, KS
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA)  
Maryknoll Lay Missioners  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic JAPAN  
Meriden Congregational Church, UCC  
Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Council of Jewish Women-Greater Long Beach & West Orange County  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
New York Justice for Our Neighbors, Inc.  
Pax Christi New Jersey  
Pax Christi New York State  
Pax Christi Rhode Island  
Pax Christi Southern California  
Pax Christi USA  
Peace & Justice Committee, Milwaukee Friends Meeting (Quakers)  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
Presbytery of the Pacific  
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator  
Quixote Center  
Raj Khalsa Gurdwara  
Rochester, Minnesota Franciscan Sisters and Cojourners  
Roosevelt-Freeport Church of Christ/ NACCE  
Salutation-Beargrass Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province  
School Sisters of St. Francis U.S. Province  
Sister Parish Inc.  
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership  
Sisters of Mercy  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team  
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia  
Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi  
Sisters of St. Joseph Boston  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet  
Social Justice Coalition, Central Lutheran Church  
South Asian Fund For Education Scholarship and Training Inc  
Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ  
Srs. of St. Francis of Philadelphia  
St Joseph University Parish Refugee and Immigration Committee  
St Thomas More, Coralville  
St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church  
St. Augustine’s Chapel Justice Salon  
St. Columban Mission for Justice, Peace and Ecology  
St. Francis of Assisi Parish  
Truah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
The Good Shepherd United Church of Christ  
The Social Justice Committee of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Austin TX  
The United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society  
Trinity Church  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist FaithAction
Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community
Unity Lutheran Church, Southgate
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Wellington UCC

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Mr. Johnny Zokovitch, Pax Christi USA
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Rev. Maria Teresa
Rev. Ruben Ortiz, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Rev. Teresa Hord Owens, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
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Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (USA)
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Sister Doreen Glynn, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Sister Ann Scholz, Leadership Conference of Women Religious
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Sister Virginia Kelleher, CSJ
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Sister Judith Costello, Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston
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Sister Sharon Altendorf
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Rev. Alexander Jacobs, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
Rev. Jeffrey Dodson, First Congregational Church UCC
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Rev. Dr. Frederick Trost, UCC
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Sister Lisa Kane, OP, Dominican Sisters and Associates of Racine, WI
Sr. Frances Hoffman, Racine Dominican Sister