

March 23, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20050

Dear President Biden:

We, the 130 undersigned faith organizations, write to you to express our grave concern regarding the [reports](#) of your administration considering reinstating family detention, an immoral and inhumane practice that was discontinued by your administration at Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facilities in 2021. Detaining children and their parents is a cruel and unnecessary way to treat migrant families after their grueling experiences. Families do not need to be detained. Giving families the opportunity to continue their immigration proceedings surrounded by the support of their loved ones and community responds to the call to treat newcomers with respect and dignity; while improving the likelihood that they can meet their legal obligations.

We write to you as representatives from the faith community, a community rich with different stories and experiences rooted in migration and displacement. Many of our traditions regard hospitality to the newcomer as an exemplary way to live out our faith. While we may hold differing perspectives, we are all certain that seeking safety and protection for one's family is an essential right that should not be abridged.

Reinstating family detention and implementing the [proposed "Circumvention of Lawful Pathways" asylum rule](#) would have dire consequences. The harm that detention poses to families and children is well documented. Detention exposes families to [unnecessary mental and physical health risks](#), while exacerbating the traumatic experiences they fled from in their countries. Any amount of detention is harmful to [children](#). It may disproportionately impact [Black pregnant women](#). Worryingly, [solitary confinement](#) and [family separation](#) have been abused as methods to silence parents that speak out. Families have also not had adequate access to [legal counsel](#) in detention. The period of detaining families must never be repeated.

Because of commitments enshrined in [the Refugee Act of 1980](#), further outlined in [U.S. law](#), anyone with a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group can seek asylum, regardless of how they arrived in the U.S. The U.S. has an obligation to adhere to international and U.S. law on this matter. We're concerned that the proposed asylum rule may exacerbate the issues prevalent in detention, around access to counsel and due process. It's plain to see that these policies will sow confusion and instill fear.

The undersigned faith organizations urge your administration not to detain migrant families. We instead invite you to be inspired by the spirit of justice and mercy that runs throughout our collective faiths and stories. Policies should be guided from a place of compassion and concern for those who are on the margins, including migrants and asylum seekers—not from a place of fear and trepidation. We unequivocally believe in the unity of families, in all their forms, and call on your administration to be courageous and consider a dignified welcome for all. Faith in a better way forward compels us to advocate for humane border management and to believe that no matter what, families belong together.

We challenge this administration to be guided by the principles and power of empathy, competence, and accountability not only to Americans but to the world's most vulnerable people. Our foundational values and story as a nation of immigrants tell us there is greater strength in hospitality than in hostility.

Sincerely,

Accompaniment & Sanctuary Coalition Colorado Springs
Adorers of the Blood of Christ, US Region JPIC office
Adrian Dominican Sisters
Ainsworth United Church of Christ
American Friends Service Committee
Asian Counseling and Referral Service
ASIP Ministry Team, Bethesda Lutheran Church
Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Border Compassion
Bridges Faith Initiative
Broadview Online Rosary
Broadview Vigil Group
Buddhist Peace Fellowship
Cedar Hills UCC, Sanctuary Team chairman
Central Pacific Conference of the United Church of Christ
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
Church of the Ascension
Church Women United in New York State
Church World Service
Commission on Global Issues Srs. Of St. Dominic Caldwell, NJ
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Conventual Franciscan Friars of Our Lady of the Angels Province
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul USA
Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel
Dominican Sisters of Hope
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington DC
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Faith Action
Faith Action Network
Faith Commons
Fellowship Southwest
First Congregational Church of San Jose
First Congregational Church, UCC
First Congregational United Church of Christ
First Congregational United Church of Christ, Portland, OR
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston
Franciscan Action Network

Franciscan Peace Center, Clinton, Iowa
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart
Guadalupe Presbyterian Church, USA
HIAS
Holy Cross Ministries of Utah
Holy Cross Sisters
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, JPIC - USA
Holy Union Sisters US Province
Hope Border Institute
Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants
Immigration Working Group, SWPA Synod, ELCA
Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America
Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center
Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Interfaith Welcome Coalition - San Antonio
InterReligious Task Force on Central America
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Joliet Franciscans
Journey's End Refugee Services, Inc.
Khmer Maine
Latino Field Ministries Coordinator
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Long Island Immigration Clinic/Sisters of St. Joseph
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area
Madison Christian Community Sanctuary Committee
Main Street Congregational UCC
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Medical Mission Sisters - Justice Office
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Middle Church
Middle Collegiate Church
Motivation Motivates
MPower Change
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
NC Synod, ELCA
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Mexico & El Paso Interfaith Power and Light
Nigerian Center
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment

Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity/Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth
Office of The Rev. Dr. Chuck Currie
Order of Lutheran Franciscans
Partnership for Earth Spirituality
Pax Christi Austin
Pedro Arrupe Jesuit Institute
Presbyterian Church USA
Presentation Sisters, San Francisco, CA
Profiles in Catholicism
Quixote Center
Raj Khalsa Gurdwara, Sikh Temple of Sterling
Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants
Sisters of Bon Secours, USA
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership
Sisters of Charity of New York
Sisters of Charity, BVM
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Justice Team
Sisters of Mercy Solidarity Committee
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur USA
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia
Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Louis Province
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, LA
Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth
Sisters of the Holy Names. of Jesus and Mary, U.S.-Ontario Province
Sisters of the Humility of Mary
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood
Social Justice Coalition
Society of Helpers
Southwestern Texas Synod ELCA
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry
The Church Lab
The Episcopal Church
The United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

United Church Outreach Ministry

United Methodist Churches of Indiana

University Lutheran Church and Student Center

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Hidalgo County, San Juan, TX

Westchester Jewish Coalition for Immigration

Wider Church Ministries Team, Central Pacific Conference, UCC