

FEBRUARY 5, 2024



Wind Of The Spirit

Immigrant Resource Center, N.J.

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Statement in Response to the So-called “Bipartisan Border Security Package”

The other shoe has dropped on immigration language in the “Emergency National Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2024,” long negotiated in secret by a handful of hostile Senators (none of them from affected communities), and it’s a boot to trample American values of welcome, diversity and due process.

The bill is rooted in talking points that distort the reality of border communities, disparage the concerns of migrants, and defame the decency and dignity of diverse Americans, and those seeking to become Americans.

The bill is based in dehumanizing rhetoric, like “catch and release,” which equates immigrants with animals hunted for sport. In the name of “ending catch and release,” the bill doubles down on an already cruel enforcement system, “requiring detention or mandatory supervision of all migrants processed at the border” to “ensure migrants follow through with the asylum process and do not disappear into the interior of the country.” This takes the reality of people with a legal right to seek asylum, staying with families and communities while their case plays out, and distorts it into a fantasy of criminals sneaking into the country and evading due process. In fact, there is no reason to jail families for merely seeking safety in this country, and almost all of those who come do show up for their court cases — it is typically the government that makes it hard for them to do so, by expelling them to places where they are unlikely to receive their notices to appear, and then penalizing them when they don’t.

That injustice will proliferate with this bill, which “closes the border” at the fiat of the President or Homeland Security Secretary and “imposes a 1-year bar on entry to any migrant who has attempted to cross at least twice while the border is closed.” There is no “detering” desperation, and people **will** try more than twice when their legal options are taken away; the criminality here is perpetrated by our government, not migrants.

The bill’s authors assure us that their new “Border Emergency Authority does not apply to unaccompanied children” — this is NOT good news, or serious humanitarian concern; during the failed Title 42 policy that this new authority resurrects under a different name, the exemption of unaccompanied children guaranteed family separation, when families desperate that at least their kids get a chance sent them alone across the border. The same will happen now.

It would be bad enough if this bill just sought to endanger children and break up families in the name of keeping safe those of us with the random luck to have been born here. That's a false choice, but the bill fails even at that: it opts for stereotypes and disinformation about how drugs enter the country, saying it will stop the ability of "cartels" to "create chaos and overwhelm the border so they can smuggle people and drugs into our communities." In reality, most fentanyl is brought into the country by U.S. citizens at ports of entry; a serious bill would address that rather than scapegoating innocent, needy human beings whom this language equates to an illicit substance.

Among the lasting damages this legislation seeks to do to our nation's ability, tradition, and duty to welcome new arrivals, in many ways it would gut the availability of due process to migrants in the name of improving the efficiency of their legal options. The imperative is to shut the door to fellow human beings whose bravery and need of help equals most of our own ancestors', and whose presence can only benefit our vibrant diversity and economic viability.

If only the "tough" and cruel options are on the table, it's a signal to go back to the drawing board completely, and kill this ill-thought-out and damaging bill.

We call on **@SenBooker** and **@SenatorMenendez**, and Representatives **@RepSherrill**, **@AndyKimNJ**, **@RepBonnie**, **Menendez**, **Pallone**, **Payne Jr.**, **Pascrell**, **Norcross** and **Gottheimer**, to vote NO on this xenophobic and self-defeating bill!

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