



January 29, 2024

Sol Ortega
Senior Advisor for Public Engagement
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Senior Advisor Ortega,

On behalf of Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ), I write in strong opposition to measures that would undermine the long-established legal right to seek asylum, even as I would also add our thanks to the Biden Administration for its efforts over the past few years to improve the safe operation of our immigration system and to remove some of the worst abuses of the previous administration. Please know, we are in support of proposals to modernize, reform, and fully fund our immigration-asylum system.

UUSJ is an organization whose members are Unitarian Universalists individuals and congregations. Our mission is to advance equitable national policies and actions aligned with UU values through engagement, education, and advocacy. Our faith's 1st Principle is a belief in "the inherent worth and dignity of all people." Together with our 5th Principle, which calls us to cherish "the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and society at large," we feel compelled to advocate for a welcoming immigration and asylum system. We are also a member of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC), a partnership of over 50 national, faith-based or community based organizations committed to enacting fair and humane immigration reform. This reflects our faith based call to "welcome the stranger" and treat all human beings with dignity and respect.

We appreciate the work done to address the worst abuses of the previous administration. We understand that those efforts, as well as attempts to comprehensively reform immigration laws, have been made extremely difficult. The number of migrants arriving at our southern border is a logistical challenge, however, we feel those can be surmounted by partnering with community-based organizations to provide welcoming services and increased resources for orderly processing of applications. A more pernicious difficulty is the attempts of some politicians to use this circumstance as a way to demonize those fleeing danger and oppression and their efforts to dismantle the right to asylum.

We must also express dismay at recent stories indicating that the Biden Administration is now open to proposals developed in negotiations on supplemental budget legislation, that would in

effect dismantle the asylum system and harm innocent people seeking safety in the United States.

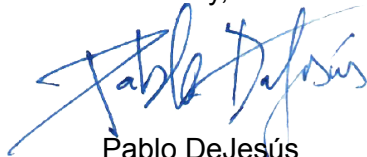
Proposed changes under consideration, apparently, include:

- **Requiring migrants to wait in a third country**, even though it is widely known that asylum systems in such countries are deeply flawed and waiting near the border leads to violence against and illness among desperate migrants;
- **Raising the standard required for demonstrating a “credible fear of persecution,”** which would seriously impair the ability of asylum seekers to make their case in a fair way;
- **Permitting the Border Patrol to arrest and expedite the deportation of undocumented immigrants anywhere they reside in the U.S.**, threatening to break up families who have long established, thriving lives in our communities; and
- **Eliminating the use of parole** to assist more than a few individuals fleeing conflict and devastation, authority your administration has successfully used to protect thousands of deserving individuals and their families, such as Afghans fleeing the Taliban.

We strongly oppose these and other measures that would undermine the long-established legal right to seek asylum, harm people who need assistance rather than scorn, close the border, and further divide our country.

We would instead hope your team will pursue the Biden Administration’s initial proposals to modernize, reform, and fully fund our immigration system, and provide compassionate support for migrants and opportunities to integrate into our country and the economy.

Sincerely,



Pablo DeJesus
Executive Director
UUSJ