

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

We write to express our deep concerns with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) announcement to reappropriate \$860 million in funding for pandemic-related activities to address the recent surge of unaccompanied migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border.

As you know, the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020 provided \$1.25 billion in emergency funding to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for COVID-19 pandemic costs. While your Department claims the reallocation of over half of this funding “does not disrupt or impede planned NIH activities,” we respectfully disagree.

This NIH funding provided the HHS Secretary with authority to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency as the Secretary determines, both domestically and internationally. However, the manmade crisis at the border should not be used as an allowable expense for these existing funds – rather, it is an irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars.

In recent months, the situation at the U.S.-Mexico border has rapidly deteriorated due to this Administration’s misguided and dangerous policies. A recent report indicates that over 95,000 unaccompanied minors have been apprehended at the border so far this fiscal year. On average, over 350 children per day have made the perilous journey to our border and been taken into government custody. In total, 901,122 individuals have been apprehended at the border since January 2021.¹

Rather than quietly trying to shift \$860 million of funds approved by Congress for important COVID-19 response efforts, the Administration should work in coordination with Congress to ensure the surge of migrants illegally entering the U.S. is addressed. The rate of illegal border crossings has created a humanitarian crisis, and it is irresponsible of the Administration to unilaterally repurpose existing funds rather than find policy solutions that do not encourage people to enter the country illegally.

¹ <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>

We are extremely disappointed to see the Department disregard Congressional appropriations amounts to only further incentivize migrants to break U.S. laws. As such, we urge the Department to ensure taxpayer funds to the NIH are maintained at their appropriated levels and work with border officials to address the ongoing crisis occurring at our southern border.

Sincerely,



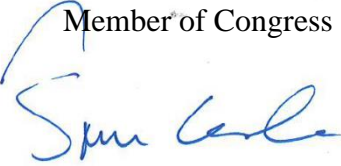
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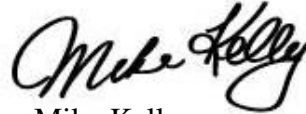
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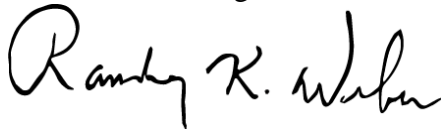
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