

# EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION **table.**

January 10, 2023

Dear President Biden and Members of Congress,

Earlier this week, President Biden made his first presidential visit to the U.S.-Mexico border, following the announcement of several significant proposed changes to address the situation at the border. We appreciate this overdue attention to the challenges facing border communities, which have been facing logistical and humanitarian challenges for many years, but particularly in the past year. We are writing to affirm some of the administration's proposals but also to voice our serious concerns with others, and to underscore our longtime call for bipartisan congressional action to address the crisis at the border.

As evangelical Christians, our concerns are rooted in the Bible. The Scriptures tell us that each person – regardless of nationality or ethnicity – has been made in the image of God with inherent dignity, which is why we insist that our country respect its legal obligations to ensure that those who face a credible fear of persecution not be returned to their countries of origin without due process. The Bible also makes clear that God has established government for clear purposes, which include maintaining order, ensuring security and protecting the vulnerable.

We are encouraged by President Biden's commitment to increase refugee resettlement from the Western Hemisphere, which will allow individuals who have demonstrated a credible fear of persecution in their countries of origin to be thoroughly vetted abroad, enter the United States lawfully and then be assisted by faith-based and other non-profit organizations in their process of long-term integration in the United States.

While we have concerns that an expanded parole program for nationals of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela will leave people with only a temporary status – replicating the challenges of many Afghan parolees, for whom we continue to urge Congress to pass legislation to allow applications for permanent legal status after undergoing additional vetting – we appreciate that this expanded program for lawful entry to the United States will be a relief to many individuals who have fled incredible hardships and who can identify sponsors in the United States. Evangelical churches and ministries throughout the United States stand ready and eager to welcome these newcomers and to assist them in the process of rebuilding their lives.



We also affirm the effort to expand U.S. governmental capacity to verify individuals' eligibility for asylum in a more efficient way and to facilitate the ability to request asylum at ports of entry, without the need to cross a border unlawfully.

However, we are deeply troubled by some other elements of President Biden's proposal. In particular, just as we did when the previous administration proposed similar policies, we object to proposed new rules to restrict eligibility for asylum for those who have passed through other countries – including countries without a demonstrated ability to ensure adequate protection from violence or to adjudicate large numbers of asylum requests – en route to the United States. We urge the Biden administration to reverse this proposal and to continue to respect our country's moral and legal commitments to due process for those who profess a credible fear of persecution, regardless of their country of origin or mode of entry.

President Biden rightly acknowledged that his proposals cannot fully resolve the challenges at the border because congressional action is needed to actually reform our laws. We were encouraged by reports last month of bipartisan negotiations to pair significant expansion of border security and asylum adjudication resources with a permanent solution for Dreamers, both of which are longtime priorities for many evangelical Christians, and we were thus disheartened when Congress adjourned without considering these priorities.

As the 118th Congress is sworn in, we urge Members of Congress to set aside partisan differences and forge consensus to address the crisis at our border in ways that both prevent those without authorization from entering and remaining in the United State unlawfully and ensure that those who profess a credible fear of persecution are treated humanely and receive due process as they seek to avail themselves of the protections offered by U.S. law.

We recognize the challenge of this task and take very seriously the biblical admonition to pray for all those in positions of governmental authority.

Sincerely,

**Evangelical Immigration Table Organizations:**

*Bethany Christian Services*

*Council for Christian Colleges and Universities*

*Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention*

*Faith and Community Empowerment*

*National Association of Evangelicals*

*National Latino Evangelical Coalition*

*World Relief*

*World Vision*