

# EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION **table.**

December 11, 2023

Dear Members of Congress,

As evangelical leaders who have urged you [in the past](#) to address the significant humanitarian and security challenges at the U.S.-Mexico border, we are encouraged by reports of bipartisan negotiations to find border solutions that will increase our national security. As you deliberate, we are praying for you, and we write to remind you of several of the biblical principles that guide many of your evangelical Christian constituents.

First, we affirm that God has established governments and given them the responsibility of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their citizens. For this reason, we have long called for immigration policy reforms that ensure secure borders and respect the rule of law. Our federal government has a responsibility to know who is entering the United States, to do whatever is reasonably possible to prevent the entry of anyone seeking to do harm, and to enforce laws governing who is and who is not allowed to enter the United States.

Equally important, we believe that God has made every human being in His image with inherent dignity. This means that human life is worth protecting, regardless of one's nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender or any other factor.

This belief is at the foundation of our asylum laws, which offer protection to those who reach the United States and can demonstrate a real fear of persecution for reasons outlined in U.S. law. That does not mean that everyone who reaches the U.S. border should be allowed in, but it does mean that we ensure due process for those seeking asylum under the terms of U.S. law. As your negotiations continue, we ask that you make certain all asylum seekers are treated with the dignity they are owed as image-bearers, preserve a clear and orderly due process for asylum, and facilitate more efficient processing to ensure that those who qualify for asylum are able to access permanent protections more quickly and those who do not qualify are not incentivized to present a marginal claim by a legal process that often takes many years to complete.

We also affirm that our government should take extra caution to ensure the wellbeing of those who are uniquely vulnerable. Among the most vulnerable are children identified at the border as unaccompanied by a parent or legal guardian, which is why we support vital provisions of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 that govern how unaccompanied children should be treated.



The conviction that each person is made in God's image also means that even those who may need to be returned to their country of origin under the terms of U.S. law should be treated humanely, acknowledging the dignity God has placed within each person, and respecting the unity of the family, which God has also established.

We are pastors and ministry leaders, not national security or border management experts, and we do not presume to be experts on the best ways to craft legislation, but we urge you to consider these two principles – ensuring secure borders and respecting the God-given dignity of each person – as you legislate, and to oppose proposals that would either make our borders less secure or would erode existing legal protections for those vulnerable to persecution, human trafficking or other significant harm.

Some particular ideas that we believe would be consistent with both of these goals include:

- Increasing opportunities for legal migration that are accessible without the need to reach the U.S. border to seek asylum, such as expanding refugee resettlement and employer-sponsored visas, both for those seeking to emigrate permanently and those seeking temporary work opportunities
- Expanding personnel and technology to fully staff ports of entry, both to ensure that asylum requests can be adjudicated without returning individuals to dangerous conditions in the border regions of Mexico and to halt the trafficking of fentanyl and other dangerous drugs, most of which currently enter the U.S. through ports of entry
- Appropriating adequate funds to ensure a fully-staffed Border Patrol with the resources, technology and training necessary to intercept individuals seeking to enter the United States without inspection
- Investing in and partnering with faith-based and other non-governmental organizations in Mexico, Central America and other parts of the world that are doing effective work to address the root causes of poverty, violence, environmental changes and corruption that lead many to feel they have no option but to leave their homelands and seek a new life in the United States

While the border challenges are significant and require congressional response, we also urge you not to neglect other urgent immigration priorities, such as ensuring opportunities for Dreamers, Afghan and other humanitarian parolees, and long-term beneficiaries of Temporary Protected Status to pursue permanent legal status. We are thankful for good faith bipartisan efforts such as the Dignity Act, which seek to address several of these challenges in ways consistent with the biblical principles that guide evangelical Christians.

We view these negotiations as a real opportunity to address concerns about border security and advance meaningful reforms for our immigration system. We appreciate each of you who have come together in a bipartisan fashion to be constructive voices in this moment. We realize that crafting legislation that respects the above principles requires wisdom, and we pray that God will provide it to you in abundance.

Sincerely,

**Evangelical Immigration Table Organizations:**

*Bethany Christian Services*

*Council for Christian Colleges and Universities*

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

*National Association of Evangelicals*

*National Latino Evangelical Coalition*

*World Relief*

*World Vision*