

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

September 23, 2022

Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
301 7th St, SW  
Washington, DC 20528

Secretary Mayorkas,

We write with grave concern regarding the wellbeing of some migrant families that are coerced on to buses and flights traveling across the country. The exploitation of asylum seekers, refugees, and other immigrants contradicts the values of our nation and the priorities of the Biden-Harris Administration. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), including Customs and Border Protection, should play absolutely no role in advancing the inhumane stunts orchestrated by the governors of Texas, Arizona, and Florida.

Cruel relocation programs have endangered the health and safety of migrants who arrive at the southern border. Reports suggest that more than 10,000 immigrants, including from Haiti and Venezuela, have been intentionally misinformed by officials in Texas, Arizona, and Florida and manipulated into traveling hundreds of miles across the country.<sup>1</sup> Reports from migrants describe being lured onto trips with promises of immediate assistance and expedited processing.<sup>2</sup> However, these lengthy trips, taking up to 48 hours, contribute to substantial illness and malnutrition.<sup>3</sup> Families with children, including newborn babies, arrive in Massachusetts, Illinois, New York, and the District of Columbia after having medication confiscated and without money or knowledge of their destination, according to immigrant advocates. While community organizations, volunteers, and healthcare providers have responded with care and compassion, no person should have had to endure such unjust hardship.

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<sup>1</sup> *Texas Says 10,000 Migrants Have Been Bused to Democratic Cities*, BLOOMBERG (Sept. 9, 2022), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-09/texas-says-10-000-migrants-have-been-bused-to-democratic-cities>; *Buses sending asylum seekers from Arizona to Washington, D.C. cost \$80K per trip*, ARIZONA'S FAMILY (Aug. 9, 2022), <https://www.azfamily.com/2022/08/10/buses-sending-asylum-seekers-arizona-washington-dc-cost-80k-per-trip/>; *Yes, Florida allocated \$12 million to transport migrants out of the state*, CBS8 (Sept. 16, 2022), <https://www.cbs8.com/article/news/verify/immigration/florida-governor-desantis-12-million-program-transport-migrants-fact-check/536-7cb8159b-79c4-4f43-9c78-0fa009d9d2f5>.

<sup>2</sup> *Migrants on Martha's Vineyard flight say they were told they were going to Boston*, NPR (Sept. 15, 2022), <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/15/1123109768/migrants-sent-to-marthas-vineyard>.

<sup>3</sup> *Migrants buses dropped off by Texas near VP Harris' residence*, Associated Press (Sept. 15, 2022), <https://apnews.com/article/mexico-donald-trump-kamala-harris-immigration-ron-desantis-f9dcae99bdca91c1c874d68453a5960c>; *As immigrants arrive in buses from Texas, health providers get to work*, CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS (Sept. 12, 2022), <https://www.chicagobusiness.com/health-care/texas-migrant-buses-chicago-health-providers>.

The dishonest relocation programs are acts of gamesmanship rooted in racism and xenophobia. In 1962, southern White Citizen Councils started “Reverse Freedom Rides” to remove Black people from their states based on false promises.<sup>4</sup> 60 years later, Governors Greg Abbott, Doug Ducey, and Ron DeSantis are using the same ploys to remove immigrants.<sup>5</sup> It is incumbent upon your agency to unequivocally condemn state officials who dehumanize immigrants and treat them as political pawns.

Manipulating migrants into traveling across the country will have significant negative consequences for them and our immigration system. The health of asylum seekers, who journeyed hundreds of miles to flee violence and persecution, is further compromised by the traumatic experience of being placed on a bus or flight for hours to be abandoned in a city where they have no ties.<sup>6</sup> Because the arrival cities are often unknown to migrants, mailed legal correspondence, such as court dates, and locations of immigration hearings are inaccessible, placing them in jeopardy. This dynamic is a result of a calculated decision to prevent proper notification and subvert legal proceedings. DHS must not participate in this malicious scheme that undermines the integrity and purpose of our immigration system.

In order to ensure DHS employees do not aid and abet these stunts, we urge you to take immediate action. First, it is critical that you issue clear guidance throughout the agency, including to Customs and Border Protection, prohibiting staff from encouraging migrants on to buses and planes to unknown cities. Second, we ask that you take steps to prevent in absentia orders of removal for migrants that were manipulated by the governors of Texas, Arizona, and Florida. Lastly, there must be a federal investigation of each state’s relocation program to identify the migrants impacted and the actors who harmed them.

The United States should have a welcoming, equitable, and just immigration system, and your leadership is critical to achieving that goal.

Sincerely,



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Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

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<sup>4</sup> *GOP governor migrant plot reminiscent of “Reverse Freedom Rides” of the 1960s*, BOSTON.COM (Sept. 18, 2022), <https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2022/09/18/gop-governor-migrant-plot-reminiscent-of-reverse-freedom-rides-of-the-1960s/>.

<sup>5</sup> *Governors who shipped migrants North took a page from an old, racist playbook*, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER (Sept. 16, 2022), <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/desantis-migrants-freedom-riders-racist-history-20220916.html>.

<sup>6</sup> *What we know about the flights*, Cape Cod Times (Sept. 19, 2022), <https://www.capecodtimes.com/story/news/local/2022/09/17/migrants-cape-cod-marthas-vineyard-ron-desantis-immigration/10400680002/>.



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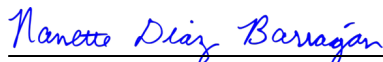
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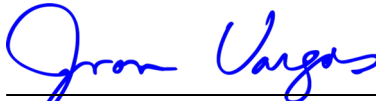
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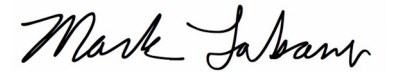
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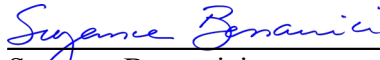
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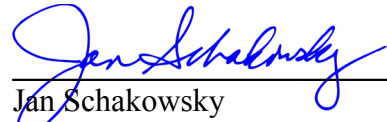
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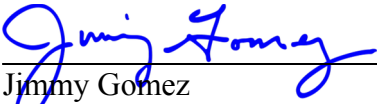
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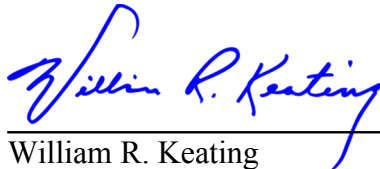
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