



U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

April 27, 2021

Ms. Shalanda Young
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Acting Director Young:

We write to you out of concern for the fiscal impact of the humanitarian and security crisis occurring along the southwest border and the escalating federal cost to American taxpayers. It is apparent that hundreds of millions, if not billions, of tax dollars are being spent as a result of the transpiring disaster. We are particularly concerned about recent reports that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) are having to redirect resources from operating budget accounts, including agent payroll, to respond to the turmoil at our border.¹ It is clear to us that the time is fast approaching where the Biden Administration will ask Congress, and the American taxpayer, to authorize the use of billions of federal dollars to bail them out of the mess of an unsecured border and a mass influx of illegal immigration.

DHS announced it is on pace to encounter more individuals on the southwest border this year than it has in the last 20 years. In March of this year alone, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) encountered 172,331 migrants—a 400 percent increase from March of last year. Even more startling: the total number of apprehensions at the border for this fiscal year (FY)—only at the halfway point—has already surpassed the total number for FY2020.²

While it is evident that President Biden’s immigration policies have encouraged historic levels of migration to the border, exacerbating the national security, humanitarian, and public health crisis, what remains unclear is the true cost—both current and future—of responding to this policy-driven crisis. Recent visits by Members of Congress to the southwest border, along with media reporting, have shed light on costs that the American taxpayer will ultimately be forced to pay:

¹ Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, April 19, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2021/04/19/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-jen-psaki-april-19-2021/>; “Republican Members Visit Border - Share Shocking Realities, Homeland Security Republicans,” April 14, 2021, <https://republicans-homeland.house.gov/republican-members-visit-border-share-shocking-realities/>.

² Southwest Land Border Encounters, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>.

- Hundreds of millions to pay non-profits, including one which employs a previous Biden campaign official and transition team member, to assist at the border.³ These contracts include \$86 million for hotel rooms to temporarily house the surge of migrants.⁴
- \$19.2 million to operate CBP's Donna Processing Facility in Texas in March, which previously reached 420 percent capacity—a 20 percent increase from the \$16 million⁵ cost to operate the facility in February. Members were told that \$50,000 per month is coming out of CBP's operational funds for migrant childcare items.⁶
- Millions in transportation costs for contracts to facilitate the movement of migrants between federal facilities and for NGOs to provide services for migrants including purchasing some domestic flight and bus tickets to transport migrants to their desired location within the United States.⁷ As of March 22, these costs now include transportation of sponsors to assist with the rising number of unaccompanied children in federal facilities.⁸
- Millions for Alternatives to Detention programs including GPS tracking devices for the increases in migrants being released from custody.⁹
- \$60 million per week to provide services to unaccompanied minors. CBP encountered nearly 19,000 unaccompanied minors in the month of March, and projects that number to increase.¹⁰ These are some of the highest numbers ever recorded.

Many of these adjusted costs were not budgeted or appropriated for, nor were they approved by Congress. Additionally, these costs were not accounted for in the most recent budget outline submitted by the Biden Administration. What is even more disconcerting is the budget outline for the upcoming fiscal year calls for a freeze in funding for DHS.

³ “Texas nonprofit lands huge contract after hiring former Biden official: report,” Fox News, April 14, 2021, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/texas-nonprofit-lands-huge-contract-after-hiring-biden-official-report>.

⁴ “Biden is spending \$86 million on hotel rooms for migrants as his administration struggles to handle the surge of families and kids trying to come to the US,” Business Insider, March 20, 2021, <https://www.businessinsider.com/biden-to-spend-86-million-hotel-rooms-migrants-near-border-2021-3>.

⁵ “‘No Place for a Child’: Inside the Tent Camp Housing Thousands of Migrant Children,” New York Times, March 30, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/30/us/texas-border-facility-migrants.html#:~:text=The%20tent%20facility%20at%20Donna,medical%20care%20and%20personnel%20contracts>.

⁶ “Republican Members Visit Border - Share Shocking Realities, Homeland Security Republicans,” April 14, 2021, <https://republicans-homeland.house.gov/republican-members-visit-border-share-shocking-realities/>.

⁷ “Catch-and-Bus: Thousands of Freed Border-Crossing Immigrants are Dispersing Across American,” March 31, 2021, <https://cis.org/Bensman/CatchandBus-Thousands-Freed-BorderCrossing-Immigrants-Are-Dispersing-Across-America>; “Feds to give Pima County \$2 million to help cover cost of asylum seekers,” Tucson News, April 13, 2021, https://tucson.com/news/local/feds-to-give-pima-county-2-million-to-help-cover-cost-of-asylum-seekers/article_f4df0dd8-9c7a-11eb-9f6a-ab2f8d7b941b.html.

⁸ “Church groups say they can help the government more at the border,” April 21, 2021, <https://www.axios.com/migrant-children-sponsor-travel-cost-560b8868-2351-46e8-b129-efeb79be864a.html>

⁹ “Exclusive: DHS warns ICE to ‘Prepare for border surges now,’ February 23, 2021, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/feb/23/dhs-warns-ice-prepare-border-surges-now/>; FY 2021 DHS Budget in Brief, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/fy_2021_dhs_bib_web_version.pdf

¹⁰ “Biden administration spending \$60 million per week to shelter unaccompanied minors,” The Texas Tribune, April 9, 2021, <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/04/09/immigration-biden-migrants-minors-shelter/>

Given all of this, we ask for your response to the following questions regarding the short- and long-term costs of these policies that have placed American taxpayers in such a position:

1. To date, what are the total federal costs above budgeted line items associated with addressing the dramatic influx of migrants at the southwest border?
 - a) What does the federal government project total costs to be for this full fiscal year and for fiscal year 2022?
 - b) Will the complete fiscal year 2022 budget request include details on how the Biden Administration plans to budget for this crisis?
2. Please account for all funding reprogramming done at DHS and HHS in relation to the situation at the southwest border, including the underlying legal authorities for such reallocations of appropriated funds.
 - a) How has the reprogramming of funds impacted the operating accounts for components of DHS and HHS?
3. Does the Administration plan to request additional federal funding to respond to the situation at the southwest border or to backfill accounts from which funds are being diverted?
 - a) If so, when can Congress expect to see details on funding levels, as well as for which agencies and accounts additional resources are being requested?
4. What are estimated long-term costs for state and local governments that will have to provide social services to the influx of illegal immigrants into their communities?
 - a) What is the estimated total cost to border states – inclusive of enhanced law enforcement and National Guard response – whose resources for their residents are being depleted due to mass federal releases of illegal immigrants in their communities?
5. How will this Administration pay for settlement fees and lawsuits associated with the termination and/or pause of border wall construction contracts? Reports suggest this could be as high as \$3 billion.¹¹
6. What is the current cost of materials that have gone to waste due to the pause in construction of the border wall system?
7. How much money has been sent to Central America under the Administration’s belief that this will prevent migrants and asylum seekers from entering the country illegally?
 - a) Please explain the Administration’s specific analysis showing how foreign aid investment in Central America will stem the flow of illegal immigration.
 - b) Please explain the cost savings that will be attained by such foreign aid investment.
 - c) Please explain the Administration’s criteria to determine where and how foreign aid will be spent in Central America to stem the flow of illegal immigration.

¹¹ “Seven Steps Joe Biden Should Take to Solve the Border Crisis, The Heritage Foundation,” April 12, 2021, <https://www.heritage.org/homeland-security/commentary/seven-steps-joe-biden-should-take-solve-the-border-crisis>; “Terminating border-wall contracts would cost ‘billions,’ says CBP head, but US has options,” Border Report, Dec. 15, 2020, <https://www.borderreport.com/hot-topics/the-border-wall/terminating-border-wall-contracts-would-cost-billions-says-cbp-head-but-us-has-options/>.

We look forward to hearing from you on this important matter, particularly if you plan to request supplemental funding from Congress to address a crisis that was created by this Administration. We respectfully request a response to this letter by May 3, 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Jason Smith
Republican Leader
House Committee on the Budget

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Katko", written over a horizontal line.

John Katko
Republican Leader
House Committee on Homeland Security