

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
United States Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Troy A. Miller
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Mayorkas, Administrator Criswell, and Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Commissioner Miller:

On March 23, 2024, Congress passed Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which includes \$650 million for the Shelter and Services Program (SSP). We now urge you to act swiftly to allocate SSP funding to recipients and adequately meet the needs of Arizona communities.

For years, across multiple administrations, Arizona communities have been paying the price for Washington's failures on the border, using their own limited resources to manage this crisis. To help ease the strain on Arizona communities, Congress began providing funding for migrant services in FY 2019. In the FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Congress provided \$800 million for SSP, which is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to support "sheltering and related activities" provided by localities and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) to help relieve overcrowding in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) short-term holding facilities. These border localities and NGO partners are on the frontlines of CBP's decompression efforts, providing shelter space, transportation to shelters and transit hubs, and other critical services to ensure the health and safety of communities and asylum seekers. The SSP has become a lifeline to border communities facing the border crisis.

Between June and September 2023, FEMA announced three separate funding award allocations for the SSP. In that process, Arizona was severely shortchanged relative to the burden Arizona has faced. From June 2023, when SSP allocations began, to February 2024, 26 percent of the total number of migrants arriving at the Southwest border were encountered in Arizona—just shy of the nearly 28 percent of Southwest border encounters that Texas saw during the same time period.

However, despite bearing over a quarter of the border crisis, Arizona was awarded 12 percent of SSP funding. Texas, on the other hand, was awarded 34 percent. In fact, Arizona received less funding than all other Southwest border states, except New Mexico.

Pima County, in particular, has been the border region most severely impacted in the last year, yet was only awarded \$12 million in SSP funding—1.5 percent of the total. Due to this insufficient funding, Pima County now faces a budget shortfall and will be unable to continue providing services starting April 1, 2024, without additional federal support. Arizona continues to experience an influx in migration and now carries the lion's share of migrant encounters. While these numbers have trended down from their peak in December 2023, they remain at historic highs for Arizona. The Department must now act quickly to allocate SSP funding to Arizona recipients, including Pima County, to avoid the disastrous outcome of a funding shortfall, which could lead to the release of legally processed asylum seekers onto the streets of Arizona border communities without support. In allocating the FY 2024 SSP funding, the Department must not once again fail Arizona communities.

In order to keep our communities and migrants safe, we urge your agencies to take immediate steps to allocate SSP funding and prioritize the communities on the front lines of the border. It is critical that you focus on expediency when allocating SSP funding to ensure that Arizona's localities and NGO partners can continue to operate and support community safety.

We further request that you provide our offices an update on your efforts to announce such allocations no later than by March 29, 2024.

Sincerely,



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator