



February 13, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
House Democratic Majority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
1705 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
United States Senate  
Senate Democratic Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
United States Senate  
Senate Democratic Whip  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, Leader Schumer and Whip Durbin:

We write on behalf of the signed Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) organizations to express our extreme concern about the outcomes of the negotiations regarding the Fiscal Year 2019 Department of Homeland Security Budget.

We thank you for your continued leadership in advocating for immigrant justice across all communities, and we understand the great pressures you face to prevent another harmful government shutdown while also protecting immigrant communities. However, the agreed upon principles and the reported compromises in the expected bill language are problematic.

AAPIs have the highest growth rate of any racial or ethnic group in the United States. Our communities encompass over 50 different ethnic groups and 100 different languages and dialects, and we have immigrated to this country through almost every procedure available in the United States. AAPIs face immigration hurdles similar to other vulnerable communities, from the two million undocumented Asian Americans living in fear to increased deportation of Southeast Asian long-time lawful permanent residents. The vast majority of these individuals are often placed in these circumstances because of the expansion of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) removal operations. As such, we are intimately familiar with the harm and impact of unfettered immigration enforcement on our communities.

As you finalize the negotiations and deliberations over potential legislation toward February 15th, we urge you not to provide any additional funding to Immigration and Customs Enforcement that exceeds fiscal year 2018. Interior immigration enforcement funding should be

reduced overall. Funding should instead be used to benefit Americans at large such as improved access to quality education, jobs, housing, and health care.

Within these frameworks, our communities reject any legislation that does not:

- **Restrict DHS's authority to transfer and reprogram funding.** Without proper oversight of DHS' spending, the department will continue to operate in a deficit and expand our country's enforcement and deportation machinations. Our communities have already seen a steady increase in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity over the last three years, and the agency has continued to increase its detention bed usage despite Congressional efforts to limit appropriations for the annual daily population (ADP). It is unconscionable to continue allowing DHS to unilaterally transfer and reprogram already allocated funding without limitation.
- **Prevent increases in Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and ICE agents.** As announced during the State of the Union on February 5th, almost 300,000 immigrants have been detained and deported. More ICE agents on the streets means more raids and more arrests of our community members before Congress is able to pass just and humane comprehensive immigration reform. Additionally, it would be false to assume that HSI agents have not been complicit in the detention and deportation of immigrants. We are particularly concerned about the lack of transparency from the subagency in their removal efforts over gang affiliation and national security. Many Asian Americans are often wrongly included in gang, both domestic and transnational, and terrorist lists. Without proper oversight of their lists and actions, we are concerned that innocent or reformed members of our communities will be caught in their removal efforts.
- **Decrease or limit annual average daily population.** Harkening back to the time of the Japanese internment camps, the federal government continues to work with private corporations to build jails for immigrants. There are currently 49,000 individuals in ICE detention, and ICE continues to view the detention bed allocations as a mandate to detain immigrants, leading to egregious over enforcement of our communities. Reports have stated that conferees have agreed upon a 12% increase from fiscal year 2018 in funding for ICE detention beds. And though it may encourage a lower detainment number by the end of fiscal year 2019, without an actual cap on ADP or restrictions on DHS's transfer and reprogramming authority, DHS may well continue to increase their ADP usage as they have done over the last three years.
- **A border wall or additional fencing of any kind.** The wall is more than a racist symbol. It is about setting aside significant amounts of taxpayer dollars to separate families and harm immigrants seeking a better life. Any wall or fence will be detrimental to the environment and further militarization at the border threatens the families who live there. Furthermore, nothing should be done at the border without the input from and approval of border communities.

The Trump Administration has placed you and other Members of Congress in the terrible position of having to choose between keeping the government open and harming immigrant communities. As you well know, many of our community members work for the federal government and/or receive critical government services. But as we have learned from our undocumented youth who were unwilling to trade their futures for the wall, the President cannot be allowed to take our communities hostage for his racist and xenophobic agenda.

Our communities are counting on you to protect and defend them and keep their families together. We urge you to take a bold stance against the Administration's anti-immigrant efforts and pass a DHS funding package respecting the interests of immigrant communities. Please contact Becky Belcore with NAKASEC at [becky@nakasec.org](mailto:becky@nakasec.org) or 312.804.3417 or Kham Moua with SEARAC at [kham@searac.org](mailto:kham@searac.org) or 202.830.8952 if you have any questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

Asian American Federation  
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Asian American Resource Workshop  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Atlanta  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Los Angeles  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, ALF-CIO  
Asian Pacific Islanders Reentry and Inclusion Through Support and Empowerment  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations  
Formerly Incarcerated Group Healing Together  
HANA Center  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Khmer Anti-Deportation Advocacy Group  
Korean Resource Center  
NAKASEC VA  
National Asian Pacific American Womens Forum  
National CAPACD  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans  
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium  
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance  
OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates  
ReleaseMN8  
South Asian Americans Leading Together  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center