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June 20, 2023

Deanne Criswell
FEMA Administrator
500 C St SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Administrator Criswell:

I write to express concern about the recently announced funding allocations for the Shelter Services Program (SSP). The decision to divert significantly more resources to non-border entities compared to those operating in border communities may undermine the ability of border communities, cities, counties, and non-profits to respond to crossings safely and effectively.

Historically, many of the initial services, including shelter services, provided to people released from Department of Homeland Security (DHS) custody first occur in the communities and counties of border states like my home state of Arizona. This was reflected in the past-years funding allocations under the Emergency Food and Shelter Programs – Humanitarian (EFSP-H), which provided resources to municipalities, counties, and non-profits to provide services to migrants released into their communities. The purpose of surging resources to border states is simple – regardless of somebody’s ultimate destination, border communities must deal with the immediate needs of people released from government custody, including shelter.

As you know, SSP was funded as part of the FY23 Consolidated Appropriations Act to provide shelter and other eligible services to non-citizen migrants released from Department of Homeland Security (DHS) custody. Unfortunately, in a departure from Congressional intent and breaking with historic allocation decisions, DHS has increased funding for interior cities under SSP at the expense of border communities. This funding shift has resulted in a much larger share being allocated to non-border states, leaving cities, counties, and non-profits in Arizona short on the resources they need to both adequately respond to border crossings and continue to provide services to residents.

However, you now have an opportunity to support border communities through the reserved second round of funding scheduled to be distributed later this summer. I request your full and fair consideration towards revisiting the misguided distributions in the first round of funding allocations in recognition of the vital role that border states play in our immigration system.

Thank you for your attention on this matter.

Sincerely,



Ruben Gallego
MEMBER OF CONGRESS