

RUBEN GALLEGO
3RD DISTRICT, ARIZONA
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0307

DC OFFICE:
1114 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4065
DISTRICT OFFICE:
1601 N 7TH STREET
SUITE 310
PHOENIX, AZ 85006-2481
(602) 256-0551

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

September 13, 2023

Dear Administrator Criswell:

I am writing to express my concern regarding a challenge that border communities in Arizona are facing when they apply for funding through the Shelter and Services Program (SSP). Certain requirements around the documentation of very specific information such as A-numbers will lead to unnecessary and unfair losses in funding to groups working tirelessly on the front lines to process non-citizens arriving in their communities.

As you know, each non-citizen entering the United States is assigned a unique A-number by the Department of Homeland Security. Many agencies within DHS use these numbers to track progress and access information throughout immigration proceedings. It is my understanding that future rounds of SSP funding will require local governments and non-profits to submit the A-number for every person that they assist to be reimbursed with associated costs.

While this will not be an issue for most migrants, there will be some who do not arrive with their A-numbers, for reasons including clerical errors, lost papers, or damaged paper information packets. If a local community processes a large group of people without A-numbers, it could cost them thousands of dollars and put their operations at risk.

To avoid this damaging situation, I request that FEMA take one of the following steps:

- Create an allowance for a 3-5% margin of error in A-number reporting.
- Remove the A-number reporting requirement.
- Mandate internal information sharing between CBP and FEMA so that information aside from A-numbers can be used to verify migrant populations.

I agree with the need for oversight and information security. However, there must be some flexibility to respond to realities on the ground. And the reality is that not every single migrant arrives at shelters with their newly assigned A-number. Arizona's border communities have been unfairly burdened with the immense financial costs of this national crisis and to require additional reimbursement conditions is unacceptable. Arizona was the only border state with zero

street releases last year, and I fear this overly burdensome A-number requirement puts that record at risk.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I urge you to find a resolution that supports border communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruben Gallego". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" and "G".

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress