

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

September 15, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Chair
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Henry Cuellar
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Granger, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Joyce, and Ranking Member Cuellar:

I request that you increase funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Shelter and Services Program (SSP) and that you revise the program's current funding award process in any supplemental appropriations package the House may consider. As currently implemented, SSP's funding and structure are creating enormous, existential implications for immigration proceedings at our Southwest border.

As Arizona's border sectors see increased activity and demand for resources, it is vital that our counties, local governments, and non-profits have adequate resources to respond. However, many will run out of funding in a matter of months. This is because SSP provides far lower funding levels for border states compared to the program that came before it, the Emergency Food and Shelter Program- Humanitarian (EFSP-H).

Now, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is asking counties and nonprofits to provide all the same resources as before with only a fraction of the funding. Border communities may soon lose the ability to provide housing, food, transportation, and health screenings, leading to unsheltered migrants in the streets of these communities. Local leaders face a choice without funding from SSP – continue to provide vital services to long-term residents or devote resources towards providing for a ballooning unsheltered population.

In addition to increased funding, SSP's formula must be revised to resolve inherent flaws around funding allocation and overly restrictive limitations on how money can be spent. Compared to ESFP-H, SSP sends far less money to border communities. While migrants ultimately end up in

cities across the United States, border communities respond to larger numbers at the point of release and should not be overlooked in funding allocations.

SSP's formula also includes arbitrary caps on categories like transportation and non-congregate shelter that keep groups on the ground from being able to adequately respond. As the SSP program was created through report language contained in the FY23 Omnibus, I request your help in correcting these issues with the program in the next supplemental funding package or budget agreement, including by eliminating arbitrary caps and allowing more resources to flow to border communities.

The current failures of SSP are hitting particularly hard in Arizona, but the ability of border states to adequately address migrant crossings also carries national implications. Arizona's localities and nonprofits have taken on additional responsibilities in the wake of Title 42 ending and have done so with enormous success: Arizona is the only border state that had zero street releases last year, but we have already seen those numbers rise in recent weeks. It is our responsibility to make sure that they have the resources to maintain their work now and into the future, which is why strong funding and revisions to SSP are extremely important.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress