

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 8, 2021

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Office of the Texas Governor
1100 Congress Ave.
Austin, TX 78701

Governor Abbott,

Over the past year, we have seen COVID-19 decimate our state, with over 2.6 million cases and 45,446 deaths in Texas alone. Nonetheless, there is now a light at the end of the tunnel with the approval of several vaccines that can bring an end to this pandemic. However, until vaccine supplies greatly increase we know that one of our best defenses against this deadly disease is testing. That is why we are concerned about media reports¹ showing that you have delayed critical federal funds designated for testing and quarantining asylum-seekers for COVID-19.

Before COVID-19, communities on and near the border were on the front lines of providing humanitarian assistance to asylum-seekers. The pandemic has added an extra layer of resources needed by these communities to ensure both the asylum-seekers and our citizens are safe. With the recent rollback of the disastrous Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), these cities and counties are again being called upon to show compassion as they receive asylum-seekers fleeing poverty, violence, and the devastating effects of climate change. While those who were enrolled in MPP are tested for COVID-19 before crossing the border, border communities are using their own funds to provide testing and quarantining for non-MPP asylum-seekers who test positive for COVID-19. Thankfully, President Biden recognizes the crucial role these communities are filling and has directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to fully reimburse communities for these services. This removes the financial burden for border communities and allows them to continue welcoming asylum-seekers safely during the pandemic.

Your recent comments about asylum-seekers carrying COVID-19 into Texas ring hollow when you are the one standing in the way of sorely needed federal resources and ultimately is the same dangerous rhetoric fueling white supremacist attacks on immigrant and minority communities. Instead of spreading xenophobic claims, we urge you to accept these vital FEMA funds localities are relying on and work with the Biden Administration as they continue to look for ways to assist both asylum-seekers and Texans.

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/04/politics/abbott-migrants-covid-testing/index.html>

Sincerely,



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



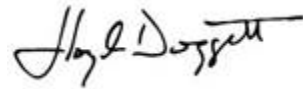
Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
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Colin Allred
Member of Congress



Marc Veasey
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Henry Cuellar
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