



## **CWS Statement to the House Judiciary Committee, pertaining to its [hearing](#) “The Biden Border Crisis: Part III”**

Church World Service (CWS) is a 77-year old humanitarian organization representing 37 Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox communions, as well as resettlement offices and affiliates, home study and post release services, and asylum seeker case management services across the country. At the border, CWS works to monitor conditions in government facilities and coordinates with shelter networks in both the U.S. and Mexico. We urge Congress to use this hearing to catalyze support for concrete [solutions](#) that treat arriving migrants with dignity, ease burdens on local communities, and address deep and ongoing concerns with conditions in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody.

**CWS urges Congress to do everything in its power to advance [key border solutions](#) as part of any must-pass legislation, supplemental funding package, or other oversight activities.** These solutions should include providing robust resources and support to shelter networks and local communities along the border and in the interior, such as via funding and additional flexibility for the Shelter and Services Program (SSP); building upon community-based case management programs for asylum seekers to provide support beyond the first 30 days after arrival; improving and expanding access to work authorization for asylum seekers; and surging resources to U.S. Refugee Admissions Program infrastructure, particularly in the Western Hemisphere.

**CWS urges Congress to recognize and address conditions in CBP detention facilities and understand serious risks associated with the detention of children and families.** On May 17, an eight-year-old girl died in a Border Patrol holding cell. According to the [Associated Press](#), the child and her family had been detained for nine days in CBP custody – in facilities often called perreras (“dog kennels”) and hieleras (“iceboxes”) by those who have been detained. The AP report further noted that agents ignored the child’s mother repeatedly requesting medical care and hospitalization. CBP standards mandate that the agency can hold individuals in custody for no more than 72 hours, a rule that is frequently ignored. Children, in particular, should be transferred out of detention as quickly as possible because being detained causes significant psychological damage, where many children show [signs of trauma](#) after being detained. Deplorable conditions in CBP custody are commonplace across the border, and despite a relative decline in overall arrivals after the end of Title 42, the situation is [deteriorating](#). Congress must exercise its oversight powers to address inhumane conditions, require swift release from CBP holding cells, hold DHS accountable for hiring Child Welfare Professionals and additional pediatric staff, and direct DHS to allow NGO humanitarian workers to care for families in custody. We must ensure that no more children die in CBP custody.

**CWS urges Congress to reject harmful legislation and policies that entrench anti-asylum, anti-children policies and further militarization of border communities.** Legislation like [H.R. 2](#) and [H.R. 3234](#) would eviscerate pathways to humanitarian protection and effectively end the right to seek asylum at the border. The administration has also announced its intention to replace Title 42 with a number of harmful border restrictions, including the implementation of an asylum ban that in practice would prevent most asylum seekers from accessing permanent protections. Congress should reject these harmful approaches and commit to upholding protections for asylum seekers and unaccompanied children enshrined in the Refugee Act of 1980 and the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act.

Our nation’s diverse faith traditions compel us to love our neighbor, accompany the vulnerable, and welcome the sojourner. We are called by our sacred texts to approach one another with love – not fear – and to affirm the value and dignity of all, including immigrants and asylum seekers. We urge Congress to affirm the dignity of arriving migrants and recognize the spirit of welcome that animates communities and shelter networks across the country. With proper resources and investment, including via the programs and policies described above, we can build a more orderly, more efficient, more humane process for border arrivals without overburdening border communities.