

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Chairwoman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Room S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Room S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

On behalf of [UnidosUS](https://unidosus.org), I write to urge you to craft and advance a Fiscal Year 2024 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Appropriations bill that funds critical programs and initiatives that would help advance equity, inclusion, and civil rights for our nation's 62 million Latinos\* and their families.

UnidosUS is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that serves as the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Since 1968, we have challenged the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos through our unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico. We believe in an America where economic, political, and social progress is a reality for all Latinos, and we collaborate across communities to achieve it.

The Department of Justice plays a key role in managing programs that can alleviate our country's significant immigration backlog, establish law enforcement accountability, and protect hard-won reproductive rights – all important priorities for the Hispanic communities that we serve. We urge you to advance a FY2024 appropriations package that uses funding and grant requirements to help modernize our immigration system and ensure that the civil rights of communities of color and women are protected. Specifically, we urge:

- **\$3.5 million for the Recognition and Accreditation program at the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR) at the Department of Justice.** Provide EOIR with \$3.5 million specifically targeted to increase staff capacity to address the backlog of pending applications from nonprofit organizations that provide immigration services. Due to insufficient staffing, the DOJ's application processing timeline has increased from between two and four months to up to a year. While cases are trapped in the backlog, organizations are unable to provide new legal services or expand their capacity. They

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\* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

struggle to retain volunteers and to provide accurate information on grant applications and reports. With additional funding, organizations will be able to better manage their programs and provide life-changing counsel to more low-income immigrants.

- **Condition law enforcement grants on data requirements that advance accountability.** Time and again, we have witnessed abuses and injustices committed by law enforcement officials against people of color. Congress cannot continue to provide a blank check to state and local law enforcement agencies without measures that promote accountability. Federal grant programs such as the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program and Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants should be conditioned on the recipients' consistent collection, reporting, and publication of data that are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, sex, English language proficiency, housing status, and other indicators that shine light on police interactions with the communities they serve.
- **Ensure that federal resources cannot be used to support state and local surveillance and investigations of reproductive health activities.** Following last summer's decision by the Supreme Court in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, concerns about the surveillance of individuals' reproductive lives have heightened. Of particular concern are the harmful effects of evolving abortion bans compounded by increased surveillance throughout the country, including private reproductive health data and geolocation information that can be gathered from mobile apps and social media platforms. Currently, federal funding structures allow for invasive surveillance and investigative assistance to state and local law enforcement. We urge you to establish legal guardrails that would prevent federal funds from being used for the purposes of abortion-related surveillance, investigation, or prosecution by state or local law enforcement agencies.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. With your help and support, the Department of Justice will be better equipped to create a better immigration system and protect the civil rights of Latinos, women, and other marginalized groups, facilitating their full inclusion in our nation's spending priorities and society.

Sincerely,



Eric Rodriguez  
Senior Vice President  
Policy and Advocacy  
UnidosUS