

November 23, 2020

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy

The undersigned organizations and subject matter experts write to express support for the Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Act (H.R. 8772) and encourage its immediate consideration in the House of Representatives. This bill has bipartisan support and has been introduced in the House, sponsored by Rep. Vicente Gonzalez (D-TX) and Rep Will Hurd (R-TX). The Senate companion to this bill (S. 2174) was introduced by Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX), Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA), Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) and Sen Tom Udall (D-NM) and passed the Senate by unanimous consent on November 16, 2020.

This bill authorizes expanded critical funding to process unidentified human remains and to resolve missing persons cases. There is an especially urgent need for this in the U.S.-Mexico border region, where Border Patrol [reports](#) finding over 8,000 human remains on U.S. soil since 1998. Nearly all of them were migrants who perished from dehydration and exposure. The true number of those who have died is likely much higher, as reporting requirements have been lacking over the past two decades.

Too often, the costs of processing and identifying these remains has fallen to local jurisdictions, many of whom lack the resources to honor best practices for forensic investigation. As a result, thousands of families continue to search for missing loved ones and the borderlands are dotted with the graves of the unidentified. This bill would support the work of diligent forensic practitioners along the border, better safeguarding the proper, standardized, and respectful recovery and identification of human remains.

The bill would also authorize funding to deploy 170 self-powering, 911 cellular relay rescue beacons in areas of desert and other borderland wilderness areas where large numbers of migrants have lost their lives to dehydration and exposure. In too many cases, those who recover remains find that individuals perished with mobile phones in hand, which were useless to call for rescue due to a lack of cellular signal. Beacons could save many lives.

The bill also includes badly needed scrutiny of measures to track and prevent loss of life. It calls on Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to provide better public information about the remains that agency personnel encounter. It requires a report on locations and use of rescue beacons. And it calls on GAO to examine how CBP records migrant death data and works to mitigate this horrifying phenomenon. The crisis of migrant deaths at the U.S.-Mexico border, which this bill seeks to address, has gone unattended for far too long.

We encourage you to support this bipartisan, important bill and agree—as the Senate did—that the Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Act is uncontroversial and may move ahead according to suspension of the rules.

Sincerely,

Southern Border Region-Based Organizations and Subject Matter Experts

Ajo Samaritans

Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment

Alliance San Diego

Alliance4Action Immigration Action Group

Angry Tías and Abuelas of the Rio Grande Valley

Anti-Defamation League

Arizona Justice For Our Neighbors

Armadillos Search And Rescue

Ben Clark, former Family Network Director, Colibrí Center for Human Rights*

Border Patrol Victims Network

Borderlands for Equity

C6 Ranch LLC

California Immigrant Policy Center

California League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

Change Begins With ME (Indivisible)

Christian Life Commission

Coalición de Derechos Humanos

Colibri Center for Human Rights
Comite Civico Del Valle, Inc.
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Convención Bautista Hispana de Texas
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Daniel E. Martinez, PhD, School of Sociology & Binational Migration Institute,
University of Arizona*
Dr. Raquel Rubio-Goldsmith, Founder Binational Migration Institute*
End Streamline Coalition
Farmworker Association of Florida
First Church UCC - Phoenix
Grace St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Migrant Ministry (Tucson, Arizona)
Humane Borders, Inc.
Indivisible San Diego Persist
Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Joanne Coutts, No More Deaths and Samaritans Volunteer*
Kate Spradley, PhD, Forensic Border Coalition*
Kino Border Initiative
Mi Familia Vota
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
NM CAFE
No More Deaths / No Más Muertes
North County Immigration Task Force
PARALELO 31 SEARCH AND RESCUE
PCOME
PICO CA
Pilgrim United Church of Christ
Robin C. Reineke, PhD, University of Arizona and Forensic Border Coalition*
Roxanna Altholz, Co-Director & Clinical Professor, Berkeley Law's International
Human Rights Law Clinic*
SAC, St. Michaels and All Angles, Tucson, AZ
Samaritans
San Diego Chicano/Latino Concilio on Higher Education
San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium
San Diego La Raza Lawyers Association
School Sisters of Notre Dame-Douglas AZ
Shelters for Hope
Social Action Committee, St. Michael and all angels Episcopal Church
South Bay People Power

South Texas Human Rights Center
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Southern Border Communities Coalition – Arizona Coalition
Southern California Immigration Project
St. Mark's Presbyterian Church (Arizona)
St. Michael and All Angels, Native Ministry (Arizona)
St. Michael's Guatemala Project (Arizona)
St Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, Social Action Committee (Arizona)
The Green Valley/Sahuarita Samaritans
Torchlight Justice Foundation
Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson Social Justice Council
UNITED SIKHS
UURISE - Unitarian Universalist Refugee & Immigrant Services & Education
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

National, Regional and State Organizations (outside the southern border region)

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Bethany Christian Services
Bridges Faith Initiative
Buen Vecino
Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative
Church World Service
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Episcopal Peace Fellowship
Farmworker Association of Florida
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights First
ICE Out of Marin
IHM Sisters Justice, Peace & Sustainability Office
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance (MIRA)
Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights
MoveOn
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center
New York Immigration Coalition
North County Immigration Task Force
Pilgrim United Church of Christ
Racial & Cultural Justice Team of Chalice UU
Red Lodge BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color)
Refugees International
School Sisters of Notre Dame-Douglas AZ
Shelters for Hope
SIREN
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Torchtlight Justice Foundation
Washington Office on Latin America
Workers Center of Central NY
World Relief

*institution listed for identification purposes only

CC: House Majority Leader Hoyer
House Majority Whip Clyburn
House Minority Whip Scalise
House Judiciary Committee Chair Nadler
House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Jordan