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500 WEST TEMPLE STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

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August 5, 2019

The Honorable Kevin McAleenan
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Acting Secretary McAleenan:

We are writing to express our opposition to the interim final rule entitled "Asylum Eligibility and Procedural Modifications" which dictates that immigrants who pass through another country en route to the U.S., but fail to apply for asylum in that country, are ineligible for U.S. asylum.

On July 16, 2019, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published the interim final rule in the Federal Register which would deem immigrants who have crossed the southern land border to the U.S. ineligible for asylum unless they demonstrate that they applied for protection from persecution or torture in at least one country outside of their country of citizenship and a final judgement denied protection to that individual.

The Administration's change of longstanding asylum policy jeopardizes the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees who are fleeing dangerous conditions. The practical effect of this new interim final rule is that immigrants fleeing violence or persecution in countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras will be required to seek protection in other potentially dangerous countries in Central America.


Los Angeles County is home to over 3.5 million immigrants, including refugees and asylees who are fleeing persecution in their home countries. The fear imposed by the interim final rule puts at risk the relationship between the immigrant community and local agencies. Additionally, as studies show, new immigration enforcement policies inflict additional trauma to immigrants, which may have an impact on the County's mental health and health systems. Therefore, Los Angeles County is opposed to your Department's harmful immigration enforcement policy.


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The Honorable Kevin McAleenan
August 5, 2019
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Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,


JANICE HAHN
Chair of the Board
Supervisor, Fourth District


MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Supervisor, Second District


HILDA L. SOLIS
Supervisor, First District


SHEILA KUEHL
Supervisor, Third District



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

October 9, 2019

Ms. Janice Hahn
Chair of the Board
Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Ms. Hahn:

Thank you for your August 5, 2019 letter. Acting Secretary McAleenan asked that I respond on his behalf.

The United States has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of aliens encountered along or near the southern land border with Mexico. This increase corresponds with a sharp increase in the number, and percentage, of aliens claiming fear of persecution or torture when apprehended or encountered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The number of cases referred to the immigration courts within the Department of Justice (DOJ) for proceedings before an immigration judge has also risen exponentially, more than tripling between 2013 and 2018. These numbers are projected to continue to increase throughout the remainder of calendar year 2019 and beyond.

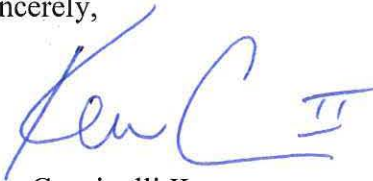
Without necessary changes to the legal framework of our immigration system, our system will continue to struggle with the wave of illegal immigration. Until Congress acts, the interim rule to which you referred in your letter will help reduce a major “pull” factor driving illegal immigration to the United States, and enable DHS and DOJ to more quickly and efficiently process cases originating from the southern border, leading to fewer individuals transiting through Mexico on a dangerous journey. This action will reduce the overwhelming burdens on our domestic system caused by asylum-seekers failing to seek allegedly needed protection in a country through which they pass prior to reaching our southern border – after all, asylum is about protection, not preference. This action will also reduce the flow of economic migrants lacking a legitimate fear of persecution and will help to stop the transnational criminal organizations, traffickers, and smugglers exploiting our system for profits.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not point out how you all might help. As you note, your jurisdiction is intimately involved with the immigrant community, which of course means both legal immigrants and illegal immigrants. It would be helpful to our efforts to process the legitimate claims of legal immigrants if local jurisdictions like yours would assist the Department of Homeland Security to more quickly and safely apprehend and remove those who are here illegally. The less illegal immigrants with whom USCIS is occupied, the more legal

immigrants can be more timely processed. Your assistance in this regard would be much appreciated.

Thank you again for your letter and your interest in this matter. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ken C II", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ken Cuccinelli II
Acting Director