

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 3, 2021

The Honorable Shalanda D. Young
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Acting Director Young:

We write to express our concern and request information about a recently reported endeavor by the Biden Administration to stand up a “conditional cash transfer program” to residents of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador (“Northern Triangle countries”).¹ The purpose of such a program would be to discourage illegal immigration from these Northern Triangle countries. In the midst of a border crisis propelled by the Biden Administration reversing successful deterrent policies, it is worrisome that the Administration’s solution isn’t to reinstate those policies or replace them with workable solutions, but instead to funnel more money to pay countries to dissuade their citizens to break U.S. laws, particularly countries with corruption concerns.

Ambassador Roberta Jacobson, the outgoing White House Border Coordinator, recently stated that a conditional cash transfer program would be targeted at residents of Northern Triangle countries, but cautioned that “the U.S. government isn’t going to be handing out money or checks to people.”² The President’s fiscal year (FY) 2022 discretionary budget request includes \$861 million in financial assistance to Central America “to address the root causes of irregular migration from Central America to the United States...”³ That request – which is much higher than current funding levels which already stand at around half a billion dollars – is couched as merely “a first step toward a four-year commitment of \$4 billion” for the region.⁴ Unlike the Trump Administration, which leveraged the use of aid to secure actual cooperation

¹ Hesson, Ted and Matt Spetalnick, *EXCLUSIVE: U.S. considering cash payments to Central America to stem migration*, REUTERS (Apr. 10, 2021), available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/exclusive-us-considering-cash-transfers-central-american-countries-stem-causes-2021-04-09/>.

² *Id.*

³ President’s request for fiscal year 2022 discretionary funding, Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget (Apr. 9, 2021), pg. 13, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FY2022-Discretionary-Request.pdf>.

⁴ *Id.* at pg. 26.

from Northern Triangle countries on migration issues,⁵ the Biden Administration has simply announced this “commitment” with apparently no strings attached.

In fact, the “root causes” of the current border crisis are the Biden Administration’s reckless rhetoric and policies which quickly and haphazardly rolled back successful deterrent policies implemented by President Trump. The strategy of sending cash payments to foreign countries to stem the tide of illegal immigration caused by Biden Administration policies is naïve and misguided. Moreover, the countries identified as potential recipients include some of the most corrupt countries in the world, with El Salvador and Guatemala ranking in the top ten.⁶ This raises further concerns that such aid would simply be wasted on corrupt politicians and organizations serving their own interests, and not those of the interests’ of the American people.

To assist Congress in conducting important oversight of the Administration’s plan to funnel money to corrupt regimes as part of an immigration policy strategy, please provide the following information no later than May 17, 2021 for the time period January 20, 2021 to the present:

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to directing cash payments or transfers to foreign governments, organizations, or individuals for the purpose of discouraging illegal immigration from residents of the Northern Triangle to the United States;
2. All documents or communications containing a description of the proposed recipients of cash payments or transfers to foreign governments, organizations, or individuals for the purpose of discouraging illegal immigration from residents of the Northern Triangle to the United States;
3. All documents and communications referring or relating to any analysis or prediction of how such cash payments or transfers to foreign governments, organizations, or individuals would impact the situation on the southwest border, particularly in reference to reducing the number of illegal border crossings by residents of the Northern Triangle;
4. All documents and communications referring or relating to concerns with corruption or misuse of funds of governments or organizations in the Northern Triangle that receive U.S. taxpayer funds in the form of aid or are intended to receive U.S. taxpayer funds in the form of cash payments or transfers intended to discourage illegal immigration from residents of the Northern Triangle to the United States.

⁵ Finnegan, Conor & Quinn Owen, *Trump admin resumes some aid to Central America in exchange for asylum cooperation*, ABC NEWS (Oct. 18, 2019), available at <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-admin-resumes-aid-central-america-exchange-asylum/story?id=66366902>.

⁶ Alas, Horus, *The 10 Most Corrupt Countries, Ranked by Perception*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT (Apr. 13, 2021), available at <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/10-most-corrupt-countries-ranked-by-perception>.

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5. All apportionments and reapportionments for FY 2021 that are in effect, including documentation of the approval date of each such apportionment action and any footnotes, for any applicable Treasury Appropriation Fund Symbol used for cash payments or transfers intended to discourage illegal immigration from residents of the Northern Triangle to the United States.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. To make arrangements to deliver documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican Staff at (202) 225-5074.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

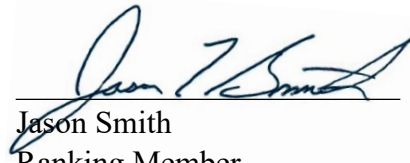
Sincerely,



James Comer

Ranking Member

Committee on Oversight and Reform



Jason Smith

Ranking Member

Committee on the Budget

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable John Yarmuth, Chairman
Committee on the Budget