



May 12, 2023

Dear Members of Congress:

I am writing to you as the President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). Our organization serves as the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the nation's largest Protestant denomination, with 50,000 churches and congregations and over 13 million members.

Southern Baptists have a long history of caring for immigrants in our nation. The Bible is unequivocally clear in its command for Christians to care for the persecuted and vulnerable. Throughout the narrative of Scripture, we see God's call to care for the immigrant and the refugee as vulnerable people made in the image of God (Matt. 25:35-40; James 1:27). The SBC has reaffirmed this command to care for the "stranger" among us through numerous resolutions, [declaring](#) "the value and dignity of immigrants, regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity, culture, national origin, or legal status."

With the ending of Title 42, we are already beginning to see devastating levels of humanitarian needs and troubling reports of buckling immigration systems. For years, Southern Baptists have been on the ground, at the border, serving migrants as they reach the United States. Through operating shelters, providing basic necessities, and coordinating resources, the SBC's compassion ministry, Send Relief, as well as many SBC churches and state conventions have been on the front lines, filling in the gaps where government has failed, meeting the basic needs of migrants. We have already communicated to the appropriate offices about the work that is already being done and our desire to work with them in serving their communities in this moment of deep need.

It is from this experience that we have consistently called for immigration reforms that secure our border and also respect the dignity of migrants as human beings made in the image of God. However, this call has only been met with decades of partisan posturing that have brought us to this moment of crisis. Elected officials' failure to lead on this issue has created a vacuum that has been filled by self-inflicted chaos and catastrophe.

As we work to meet immediate needs in this ongoing humanitarian emergency, action must be taken now to limit the scale of this disaster, and Congress must look ahead and find real, bipartisan solutions that can keep this from happening again. Our convention has [called](#) for legislation that includes "an emphasis on securing our borders and providing a pathway to legal status with appropriate restitutionary measures, maintaining the priority of family unity, resulting in an efficient immigration system that honors the value and dignity of those seeking a better life for themselves and their families."



THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS  
LIBERTY COMMISSION  
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

In this moment, when it would be easiest to retreat to partisan talking points and public relations stunts, I urge you to take up meaningful, bipartisan legislation that can actually take steps toward addressing this crisis. The principles of safety, compassion, justice, refuge, and the rule of law are not in tension — we are able to most effectively and compassionately serve the vulnerable and keep our communities from being overwhelmed when we have strong border security paired with robust, navigable legal pathways for those who need them most.

We urge you to take steps toward desperately needed immigration reform. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

Frederick Brent Leatherwood  
President  
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission