



## CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

**RON NIRENBERG**  
**MAYOR**

March 31, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Secretary Mayorkas:

Thank you for your ongoing leadership and partnership. I am reaching out to inform you that the San Antonio community is once again seeing an unsustainable increase in the number of migrants transiting through our city after release from federal immigration custody. More troubling is the pattern of individuals arriving in San Antonio without a clear sponsor, a destination, or the resources to reach their destination. These surges in migrants, along with insufficient humanitarian infrastructure and funding along border communities, creates a domino effect that strains available support resources in our region. I respectfully request immediate action from the Department of Homeland Security to increase funding for humanitarian infrastructure and resources to communities in the Del Rio Sector and implement policies and procedures to ensure the safe and orderly transit of migrants.

On March 30, 2022, City officials participated in a virtual meeting with Mary Ann Tierney, head of the Southwest Border Coordination Center (SBCC). We specified San Antonio's existing capacity to accept 600 migrants per day, with existing travel arrangements, transiting through our travel hubs. Ms. Tierney provided an update on SBCC operations and plans and was receptive to our feedback regarding migrants without travel plans or sponsors, as well as the limitations of shelter and transportation resources in the Del Rio/San Antonio migrant travel corridor. We welcome the formation of the SBCC and increased resources and inter-agency coordination among DHS components. Nevertheless, there are some immediate operational investments that are crucial to addressing the current migrant crisis and avoiding future crises in our region.

The City requests that, through the leadership of Chief Gloria Chavez, Customs and Border Patrol facilitate a transportation plan that transports migrants to additional transportation hubs, besides, San Antonio, such as Austin, Houston, and other Texas hubs. Additionally, we request that the federal government execute the necessary interagency agreements or new contracts with Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) to augment NGOs capacity to pay for migrants' travel. These two actions would help to keep the numbers of migrants transiting through San Antonio at a manageable level.

Since 2019, the City of San Antonio has worked closely with the Department of Homeland Security and border nonprofit partners to serve migrants transiting San Antonio. San Antonio has been the primary transportation hub for migrants released from Immigration and Customs Enforcements (ICE) facilities in Pearsall, Dilley, and Karnes City, Texas and migrants released from Customs and Border Patrol custody in the Del Rio Sector. We have also assisted local Immigrations and Customs Enforcement facilities to provide COVID-19 sheltering capacity for migrants who test positive for COVID -19.

From April 2021 through March 28, 2022, the City of San Antonio and local nonprofit partners have assisted more than 147,832 migrants with support in navigating our travel systems, providing food and hygiene products, assisting with communication with sponsors, and referring migrants to hotels for overnight or multi-night stays.

Prior to March 2022, the majority of arriving migrants had onward travel plans and had been provided with some level of humanitarian assistance. More recently, the volume of arriving migrants and those arriving without host sponsors and financial means for travel has significantly increased. Over 7,800 individuals arrived in San Antonio from March 19 – 29, 2022, and an average of 628 individuals stayed in shelters, slept overnight at the airport, or slept in City parks.

The City of San Antonio and partners have repeatedly expressed concern about the concentration of migrant flows and the limited community capacity to provide an adequate humanitarian response. Reimbursement support through the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) is appreciated, but the unpredictability of migrant surges makes long-term planning difficult. Furthermore, we are aware that Congress appropriated \$150 million for the EFSP for FY22. Additionally, we are concerned that the \$150 million allocated to EFSP for FY22 will be quickly depleted.

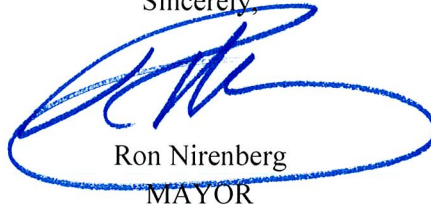
**The City of San Antonio and our coalition partners have exhausted local capacity to meet the increasing needs of migrant travelers arriving in San Antonio. As a result, we are formally requesting the following:**

- 1.) A meeting with Regional Administrator Maryann Tearney during her visit to Texas, as well as direct communication and coordination with Chief Gloria Chavez.
- 2.) That the Department of Homeland Security provide direct and significant financial investments and capacity building resources to border nonprofit organizations and local governments in the Del Rio Sector (comparable examples include the Humanitarian Respite Center in Rio Grande Valley and Annunciation House in El Paso). This will ensure that migrants arriving in San Antonio are better prepared for onward travel.
- 3.) The implementation of procedures and processes that limit sudden increases in transiting migrants. Our recent experience of migrants arriving without sponsors, or any prospect of housing is dangerous for them and creates new homeless populations in communities that do not have extra resources to shelter them. Our partners report migrants having unrealistic expectations of finding shelter in the U.S., when the reality is that a person seeking asylum is not entitled to any housing support until asylum is

granted and may not work. At a minimum, migrants who do not have a place to live should be transferred to a federally funded shelter.

The City of San Antonio has been a proactive partner in creating solutions in coordination with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, border communities and local nonprofit partners to effectively serve migrants transiting San Antonio. We appreciate your consideration of our requests and look forward to increased dialogue to resolve our concerns.

Sincerely,



Ron Nirenberg  
MAYOR