The Honorable Patty Murray

Chair

Committee on Appropriations

United States Senate

S-128 The Capitol

Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger

Chair

Committee on Appropriations

United States House of Representatives

H-307 The Capitol

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins

Vice Chair

Committee on Appropriations

United States Senate

S-146 The Capitol

Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro

Ranking Member

Committee on Appropriations

United States House of Representatives

1036 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

 May XX, 2023

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations dedicated to environmental protection, civil and human rights, and community uplift, we write again to urge you to provide funding and guidance in the FY 2024 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations bill to remediate the immense harms that border wall construction and militarization have inflicted on communities and wildlife in the borderlands. Many of our groups have members who continue to witness first-hand the devastating impacts from construction of border wall and related infrastructure on border communities and the environment,

We very much appreciate that the initial FY 2023 House and Senate Homeland Security appropriations bills would have authorized the transfer of funds to the federal land management agencies to begin to address damage from wall construction, and we were extremely disappointed that this funding was not retained in the final FY2023 omnibus bill.

As we have previously written, the prior administration’s insistence on unnecessary, wasteful, and harmful border wall construction wreaked destruction on the borderlands and the millions who call the border region home, including damaging lands sacred to the O’odham, Carrizo-Comecrudo, and Kumeyaay peoples; desecrating Native American burial sites; dynamiting pristine mountain wilderness; erecting walls in floodplains; separating imperiled wildlife populations; destroying fragile resources in national wildlife refuges, forests, monuments and other public lands; depleting ancient water sources in sensitive desert ecosystems; seizing ranches, farms, and backyards from families; risking lives by forcing migrants to cross into more remote regions; and fomenting dangerous racial hatred against migrants and Indigenous peoples.

The Secretaries of Homeland Security under previous administrations have waived eighty-four cornerstone federal laws, along with countless unnamed state and local laws and regulations, created to protect the environment, wildlife, religious freedom, historic and cultural sites, and taxpayers’ interest in responsible procurement. To date, those waivers of law have not yet been rescinded, thus continuing to deny equal protection under the law to the borderlands and the millions who call the border region home.

The Biden Administration has taken some initial steps to address the damage, but much more must be done. Congress must rescind any remaining funding for construction of the border wall and related infrastructure, refrain from providing any new wall funding and provide the resources necessary to restore and repair border communities and lands to mitigate the harms done.

To achieve these goals and address these concerns, we urge the House and Senate FY 2024 Homeland Security appropriations bills to take the following steps:

* Rescind any remaining and all previously appropriated funding for the construction of the border wall system, including for lights and enforcement zone development.
* Reject any proposals to provide additional funding for border wall and related infrastructure.
* Support, at a minimum, the president’s FY 2024 budget request for statutory language authorizing the transfer of up to $225 million in funding from DHS to the land management agencies for environmental and other mitigation activities, including land acquisition, related to border wall construction. We strongly support no less than this amount in the FY 2024 Homeland Security bill.
* Ensure that the multi-agency agency working group established previously by Congress to identify the impacts of border security infrastructure on border security, communities, tribes, wildlife, and local environments makes a robust effort to develop a comprehensive plan to remediate harms from border barriers in consultation with local governments, tribes, communities, scientists, environmental experts, and other stakeholders.

There must be continued efforts to address the massive and needless damage to the border region and its people as swiftly as possible. We strongly urge you to include these requests in the FY 2024 appropriations bills.

Sincerely,