April 27, 2022

The Honorable Barbara Lee  
Chairwoman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
HT-2 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Chairwoman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Homeland Security  
2006 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Homeland Security  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwomen Lee and Roybal-Allard and Ranking Members Rogers and Fleischmann:

As you begin work on fiscal year 2023 appropriations bills, we write to request that you include language to prohibit funds made available from being used to remove or to negotiate or enter into an agreement to facilitate the removal of: any citizen, former citizen, or national of Vietnam who entered the United States before July 12, 1995; any citizen, former citizen, or national of Cambodia who entered the United States before March 22, 2002, when the U.S. signed a repatriation agreement with Cambodia; or any citizen, former citizen, national, or former national of Laos who arrived in the United States before the date of enactment of such legislation.

In 2008, Vietnam and the United States reached a formal agreement that contains specific restrictions on the repatriation of certain individuals to Vietnam, including barring the repatriation of any Vietnamese national who arrived in the United States before our two nations established formal diplomatic relations on July 12, 1995. However, the Trump Administration entered into a new agreement with Vietnam in 2020 that eliminated the established protections for Vietnamese refugees. The United States signed a repatriation agreement with Cambodia on March 22, 2002, and does not have a repatriation agreement with Laos.
Under current immigration law, a governor’s pardon of prior convictions may create narrow grounds to prevent removal as well as remove some barriers to immigration benefits, such as consideration for naturalization. Unfortunately, there are still many legal barriers and a court process that individuals need to go through.

It is in the United States’ best interest to not use funds appropriated to the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State to facilitate the deportation of certain categories of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian migrants. The stories of these immigrants reflect the experiences of many refugees who came to America from refugee camps or war-torn countries. These individuals have grown up in communities that are still grappling with the trauma of wars. Many of these individuals made mistakes when they were younger, and many have given back and greatly contributed to their communities since then. Many Vietnamese migrants sought refuge in the United States during or as a direct result of the Vietnam War. Numerous Hmong migrants from Laos fled their country, and subsequently entered the United States, because they had worked with the CIA during the war and were at risk for persecution. Further, repatriating these migrants would damage our communities. This is a human rights issue that requires a humane and compassionate solution. We cannot simply cast aside members of our communities and deport them to a place they do not know. It would break apart families and would expel members of our communities who have been in the United States for decades and have made positive change and meaningful contributions to our communities and our economy.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress