April 26, 2023

Statement for the Record
House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Full Committee Mark-up of H.R. 2794,
the “Border Reinforcement Enforcement Act of 2023”
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The Southern Border Communities Coalition

The Southern Border Communities Coalition (SBCC) writes in strong opposition to the Border Reinforcement Act of 2023 that the House Homeland Security Committee will mark up on April 26th. The bill would violate human rights at the southern border by forcing the construction of a deadly border wall, expanding intrusive surveillance of our communities and harming migrating people seeking protection, violating our international commitments and signed treaties.

The southern border region has always been a place of hope, welcoming and opportunity. Right now, our nation has both the chance and responsibility to live up to our shared values, to uphold human dignity, and develop just, humane and functional systems to welcome vulnerable newcomers. This bill does not provide moral or constructive policy solutions, but instead will expand and exacerbate current harms to southern border communities and put migrating people in harm’s way.

Specifically, the bill would:

1. Force the construction of harmful and wasteful border wall across our communities at levels planned under the Trump Administration
2. Undermine tribal sovereignty and the rights of states, local governments and property owners by requiring all stakeholder consultations to be completed within 7 days, an impossible timeframe
3. Refuse opportunities for property owners to challenge in court land condemnations for border wall construction
4. Deny border communities equal protection under the law by requiring the waiving of “all laws” to expedite border wall construction, exempting the borderlands and communities
from dozens of protective laws like the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and the Endangered Species Act
5. Expose American taxpayers to waste and abuse through the waiving of contracting laws
6. Needlessly prevent migrants from flying to their final destination by barring TSA from accepting documents issued by ICE or CBP after processing migrants
7. Incentivise local law enforcement entanglement with immigration authorities by making Operation Stonegarden a permanent program within DHS
8. Further militarize the border by increasing Border Patrol agents to at least 22,000 while loosening hiring requirements
9. Harm the quality of life and violate the civil rights of border communities by requiring the use of intrusive aerial drones all hours of the day and night
10. Deny urgently needed resources for community organizations providing humanitarian assistance at the border

SBCC urges Members of Congress to vote ‘no’ on this dangerous bill that will bring suffering, harm and violations of our human rights to our southern border region. Instead, SBCC urges Congress to focus efforts on creating a system that uplifts human rights and our commitment to moral policies.

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