



1201 16th St, N.W. | Washington, DC 20036 | Phone: (202) 833-4000

Rebecca S. Pringle
President

Princess R. Moss
Vice President

Noel Candelaria
Secretary-Treasurer

Kim A. Anderson
Executive Director

February 9, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
300 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

On behalf of the National Education Association (NEA) and our 3 million members, I call on the Biden Administration to ensure that all individuals who arrive at our borders have a right to seek asylum. This issue is about whether we will uphold our defining values, or whether we will turn our backs on newcomers seeking to create secure lives in the nation we still proudly hail as “the land of opportunity.”

We cannot stand by as a country when the right to asylum is threatened. More to the point, President Biden pledged to finish the work of building a fair and humane immigration system. The Biden Administration must keep its pledge to end restrictions on asylum seekers.

Last month, the Biden Administration announced revisions to how asylum requests are processed at the border. We support efforts by the Administration and Congress to explore new ways to expand parole processes for individuals experiencing conflict, poverty and persecution in their home countries. However, asylum is a legal and human right. All children, regardless of language, ethnicity, or manner of entry, have a fundamental right to seek protection at the border through a fair proceeding.

We support efforts by the Biden Administration to assist refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants, to turn the page on the draconian policies of the previous administration that have harmed our students and educators, while ensuring the dignity of migrants. We support the Administration’s work on addressing the protection of noncitizen workers who report labor violations; expanding the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program; and fortifying DACA through rulemaking. Moreover, we favor tripling refugee resettlement from the Western Hemisphere.

However, we are disappointed that these new parole processes are limited to refugees with the necessary resources to meet strict requirements, effectively closing this opportunity to those most in need. Additionally, the path for asylum would be effectively closed for those who seek help at our borders from certain countries. If the Biden Administration moves forward with this proposal, it would be playing into the hands of fearmongering, anti-immigrant politicians who are bent on continuing the policies of the previous administration. Most importantly, the policy

would cause irreparable and devastating harm to families, especially Black and brown families, who are simply searching for safety and security at our borders.

We understand that the issues your department tackles are complex, but, as an organization, we also know that many of these policies have real life implications for our educators, the students we serve, and the communities in which they live.

The National Education Association has and will continue to stand up for immigrants who call this country their home. Additionally, we will continue to stand up for the right to seek asylum in this country in accordance with our international obligations. To that end, the Biden Administration must reverse course and should not restrict individuals' ability to seek asylum at our border. Together, we can continue to make this country a beacon of hope for people from around the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rebecca S. Pringle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "P".

Rebecca Pringle
President
National Education Association