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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

November 8, 2019

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The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr,

I am aware that you are visiting the United States Attorney's Office for the District of New Mexico to meet with state and local law enforcement. While you are in my district, I urge you to sit down with stakeholder groups on the ground who are providing humanitarian support and legal assistance to asylum seekers so that you can better understand the damaging impact that your policies are having on human beings who are fleeing extreme violence, torture, and likely death.

Recent coverage of the Prompt Asylum Claim Review (PACR) suggests this program breaks from well-established procedure, forces the most vulnerable individuals to experience even greater hardship when pursuing their claims and seeking legal representation, inhibits meaningful access to an attorney, and violates Customs and Border Protection Policy. Keeping individuals within the custody of Customs and Border Protection restricts an attorney's access to their client and the lack of timely communication keeps them in the dark regarding rule changes. Attorneys are prohibited from visiting in-person with their clients and individuals struggle to even access legal counsel due to the limited access to a phone.

These are all critical components of due process that are disregarded in the pretense of efficiency. When individuals are running from persecution, danger, and disarray, we must ensure our policies, and the implementation of such policies, are transparent and represent the strength, character, and due process that embody the American dream. I hope you do your due diligence to hear all sides of this critical issue.

I also ask you to meet with Tribal governments to conduct government-to-government tribal consultation on pressing issues facing Tribal communities including the ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and tribal public safety and law enforcement. I hope that you spend an ample amount of time emphasizing the importance of tribal consultation when it comes to all law enforcement issues. Ensuring proper compliance with tribal consultation policies is critical to improving trust between Indian Country and law enforcement.

I appreciate your prompt attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

Deb Haaland
Member of Congress