

HENRY CUELLAR, PH.D.
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

July 14, 2017

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor
State of Texas
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott:

I write you regarding federal dollar reimbursement to our local border communities for their costs of providing humanitarian relief during the recent undocumented immigrant crisis. As you are aware, in 2014 an unprecedented number of undocumented immigrants arrived in South Texas and created a humanitarian crisis on the border. Local communities, nonprofits and community partners provided humanitarian relief in the form of food, medical assistance, transportation, shelter, and security. Since then I had been working to reimburse our local communities with federal dollars for the cost of providing humanitarian relief.

As a house appropriator, I added language since 2014 to each yearly Homeland Security Appropriations Bill to allow the State of Texas to use FEMA's State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) federal dollars to reimburse these communities. I have work with Senator John Cornyn and State Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa on this matter. As you know the State of Texas has not reimbursed our border communities.

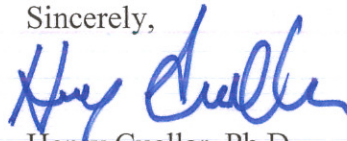
I understand there was a misunderstanding between the Federal Emergency Management Agency and your office that led to the mistaken assumption that the use of SHSGP funds to reimburse communities was not allowed. I also understand that this misunderstanding has held the state back from reimbursing communities. As the author of this language, I specifically allowed the State of Texas to use these federal dollars for reimbursement. Furthermore, I contacted FEMA and directed them to further clarify this misinterpretation of the law. As a result, today FEMA release a new informational bulletin (No. 418) titled *Guidance for Use of Homeland Security Grant Program Funds for Unaccompanied Children and Families (Southwest border)*. ***See attached.***

The FEMA bulletin clearly states that Homeland Security Grant Program recipients, like the State of Texas, may use federal grant funding to reimburse local communities for the costs related to providing humanitarian relief to unaccompanied immigrants. The State of Texas as the administrator of these federal funds may use any of the FY 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017 HSGP grant awards to provide reimbursements.

I hope this information clarifies the issue and that the State of Texas will provide a portion of these Homeland Security Grant Program federal funds to reimburse our communities for the cost of providing humanitarian aid. The State of Texas receives over 20 million dollars a year from the State Homeland Security Grant Program that can be used to reimburse communities. According to FEMA, in FY 2016 Texas received \$21,498,000, and as of May 2017, 88% of the FY 2016 Homeland Security Grant Program funds had not been drawn down.

I thank you for your consideration to use these federal funds to provide a reimbursement to cities like Mc Allen, TX, Laredo, TX and other border communities. It is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,



Henry Cuellar, Ph.D.

U.S. Congressman

28th District of Texas

cc: U.S. Senator John Cornyn
Texas State Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa
City of Mc Allen, TX Mayor Jim Darling
City of Laredo, TX Mayor Pete Saenz