

## **Statement of Congressman Cohen on House Judiciary Committee's Budget Recommendations Pursuant to H. Con. Res. 14**

Unfortunately, I am isolating with COVID and cannot join you at the markup today of the Committee's budget recommendations. I submit this statement to memorialize my deep opposition to this proposal and this broader budget reconciliation effort.

My Republican colleagues are following their pied piper, Donald Trump, to disaster. Their one "big, beautiful bill" to enact the Trump agenda will kick millions of Americans out of their healthcare plans, take away food from the hungry, close childcare centers and preschools, cap student loans and raise interest rates, and more. Why? To increase the military budget by \$150 billion. To spend \$45 billion to build jails to detain immigrant families.

This Judiciary bill is one of the most heartless pieces of legislation I have ever seen. It charges people fleeing persecution in their home countries and coming to the United States for safety a fee of *at least* \$1000 to file an asylum petition. The United States will demand money from some of the most desperate and vulnerable people in the world, so that we can extend tax cuts for billionaires. It is ludicrous and it is cruel.

This bill is stuffed full of immigration fees. The point isn't to raise revenue. In fact, the fees are to discourage and limit immigration, which would mean few would even pay the fees. Immigration to the United States would be reserved for those who could afford it. Just like Trump's Gold Card --- this is about immigration for the rich. When the Republicans talk about "merit," they mean rich. Merit isn't about how hard you work, how clever you are, your unique contributions, uniting families, or building communities. Wealthy people are meritorious.

Many of us grew up learning about the great waves of immigration coming to the United States. The tales of those on ships crossing the Atlantic and coming into the Port of New York to be greeted by the Statue of Liberty and arriving at Ellis Island. That story was often romanticized and never fully represented the American immigrant experience. But the core -- that anyone could come to America with nothing and, with enough hard work and grit, be anything -- expresses our national values and the country we want to be.

Famously, inscribed on the pedestal, Emma Lazarus closes her poem *The New Colossus* with words she ascribes to Lady Liberty:

"Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

A minimum \$1000 fee to apply for asylum. Really? A \$5 million “Gold Card”? At this moment, we need to ask ourselves, “Who are we?”

And while this bill betrays our national values and aspirations, it also squanders the incredible opportunity the Republicans gave themselves. Under our instructions, this Committee has \$110 billion over 10 years for our programs. That amount of money could provide a generational investment opportunity or the resources necessary to make significant policy shifts that are difficult to implement with annual appropriations.

We could have dramatically upgraded policing – with stricter recruitment standards, further professionalization, better workplace policies and environments, greater training – all to support our local law enforcement agencies and improve their responsiveness to our communities. We could have expanded Alternative Response Units and Joint Response Units to better respond to crises with the right resources. We could have rebuilt facilities to make our correctional institutions safer for everyone. We could have heavily invested in alternatives to detention and evidence-based re-entry programs. We could very easily end the DNA testing backlog and bring sex offenders to justice now and prevent rapes.

None of that is in this bill. Instead, it imposes huge fees on immigrants to pay for immigration judges. It is unclear if Republicans intend for the Administration just to rehire the judges DOGE just fired. It spends \$45 billion to detain immigrants, including children.

This bill, and the broader reconciliation package, put forward a vision of America that is unrecognizable. I urge my colleagues to vote NO.