

[News](#)



Asylum-seeking migrants stand in line to be transported at a staging area near the border wall in Jacumba Hot Springs, California, June 5, after U.S. President Joe Biden announced a sweeping border security enforcement effort. (OSV News/Reuters/Go Nakamura)



by Chris Herlinger

[View Author Profile](#)

cherlinger@ncronline.org

[Join the Conversation](#)

June 17, 2024

Editor's note: *Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*

Monday Starter



A prominent Catholic immigration advocacy group has condemned the Biden administration's new restrictions for asylum seekers, saying they endanger lives and could increase family separations.

"This move to drastically reduce asylum access is dangerous, immoral, and illegal," said Anna Gallagher, executive director of the [Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.](#), or CLINIC. Affirming the organization's commitment to the principles of Catholic faith, Gallagher said, "We vehemently oppose these changes to the asylum system."

"We are appalled that the United States is abandoning its commitment to humanitarian protection and national and international asylum law in issuing this executive order," [Gallagher said in a statement issued June 4](#), the same day the White House announced the new restrictions.

"The policy will strip countless migrants of their legal right to seek asylum with due process, and as a result many lives will be endangered and lost, and families separated. Respect for human dignity according to Catholic tradition requires robust protections for those fleeing harm, which this policy gravely undermines," she said.

Gallagher added: "We will continue praying and advocating for policies that reflect our moral duty to welcome the stranger with compassion and dignity."

Another CLINIC staffer, Karen Sullivan, director of advocacy for the Silver Spring, Maryland, organization, said CLINIC was "grieved to consider the men, women, and children that these barriers to asylum will affect."

"Vulnerable people will be returned to situations of extreme danger because of this order," she said. "Instead of continuing to erode asylum protections, we urge the administration to enhance and strengthen the asylum system and to create more safe and lawful pathways for migration."

Advertisement

Other advocacy groups have also condemned the actions, and have even [taken the administration to court](#).

The White House said the moves would bar immigrants who cross the U.S.-Mexican border illegally from receiving asylum when the "Southern border is overwhelmed," making it easier "for immigration officers to quickly remove individuals who do not have a legal basis to remain in the United States."

The White House [statement](#) said the restrictions are not permanent and will be "discontinued when the number of migrants who cross the border between ports of entry is low enough for America's system to safely and effectively manage border operations."

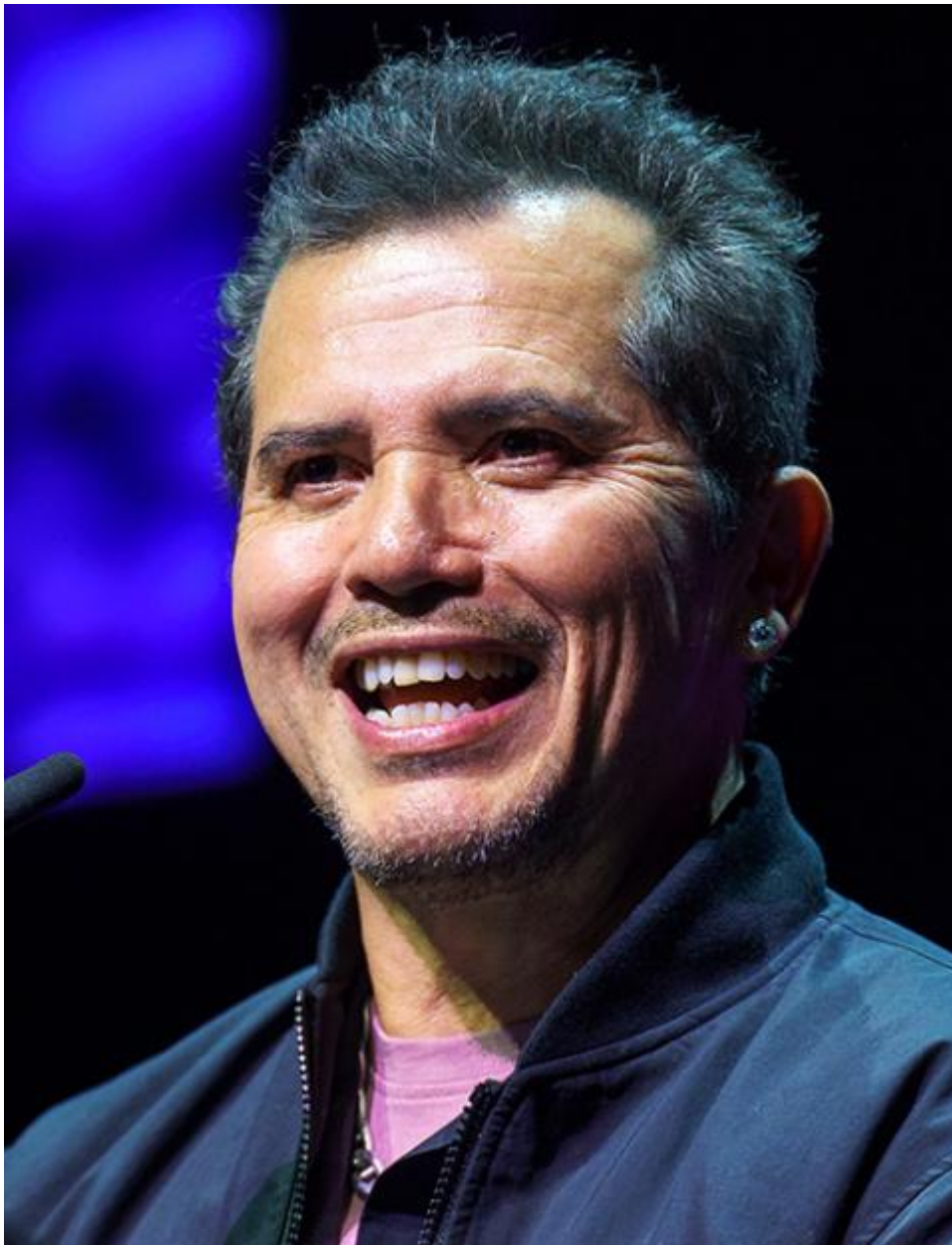
The restrictions include some humanitarian exceptions, such as for unaccompanied children and victims of trafficking.

In its statement, the White House reiterated its support for a bipartisan immigration bill that Republicans have declined to support.

CLINIC advocates for humane and just immigration policy and is the largest U.S network of nonprofit immigration programs — more than 450 organizations in 48 states and in the District of Columbia.

Cabrini Mission Foundation names Leguizamo as ambassador

The [Cabrini Mission Foundation](#) — which continues the legacy of the religious order founded by St. Frances Xavier Cabrini in 1880 — has named Emmy Award-winning actor, producer and activist John Leguizamo an ambassador for the foundation.



John Leguizamo (Wikimedia Commons/Jay Dixit)

"With his remarkable talent, commitment to social justice, and drive to create positive change, John embodies the spirit of the mission to serve and empower communities in need," the New York-based foundation said in a [June 11 announcement](#).

The foundation serves as the philanthropic arm of the [Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus](#), Guadalupe Province, the religious order founded by St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, the patron saint of immigrants.

The announcement said that Leguizamo, who has appeared in more than 100 films and is a frequent star on the Broadway stage, "will use his voice and influence to raise awareness about the foundation's essential work in immigration, education, healthcare, social services and pastoral care, especially among the most vulnerable and marginalized communities."

"John Leguizamo's ability to connect with people from all walks of life makes him an ideal partner for our mission," said Sr. [Pietrina Raccuglia](#), who is the chairwoman of the foundation's board of directors. "We're honored to welcome John aboard and eagerly anticipate collaborating with him to effect meaningful change."

For his part, the Colombia-born actor said, "My mother has long been connected to the Missionary Sisters, and I have always respected St. Frances Xavier Cabrini's legacy here in New York City. The Foundation is a wonderful organization continuing Mother Cabrini's work, and I am honored to be associated with them."

Developer named for Felician convent project

The [Felician Sisters of North America](#) and [Felician Services](#), which are repurposing a portion of the historic [Blessed Virgin Mary Convent](#) in Livonia, Michigan, for affordable and market-rate senior living housing, have named the project's developer.

In a May 22 announcement, the Felicians announced that [MHT Housing Inc.](#), a nonprofit based in Bingham Farms, Michigan, had been selected as the developer that will oversee the project.

MHT Housing Inc. is a developer of high-quality affordable housing. [The Felician project](#) will involve developing approximately 77 one- and two-bedroom units, as well as carports and a community space for activities.

While an official groundbreaking is pending, the opening of new senior housing is anticipated in 2027.

"The Felician Sisters of North America are thrilled to be working with MHT Housing on this project. Their history of working with faith-based organizations, including the Archdiocese of Detroit, makes them an ideal partner to carry out our hopes and goals for this project," said Sr. Janet Marie Adamczyk, the congregation's provincial vicar.



A view of the Felician Sisters' chapel and convent in Livonia, Michigan. The congregation has announced that MHT Housing Inc. has been selected as the developer that will repurpose the western portion of the historic Blessed Virgin Mary convent for affordable and market-rate senior living housing. (Courtesy of Felician Sisters of North America/Elliot Cramer)

"The repurposing of the convent is in alignment with the Felician Sisters' Laudato Si' Action Plan to use our properties and buildings more creatively for those in need," she said. "MHT's dedication to serving communities and revitalizing neighborhoods aligns with this stance."

The project will entail changes to the western part of the convent, which was completed in 1936. The eastern portion of the building will continue to be the home of the Felician Sisters who reside and serve in the Livonia area, said Adamczyk.

Van Fox, MHT's president, said his organization was honored to be partnering with the Felician Sisters.

"We are passionate to maintain the beauty and elegance of the Blessed Virgin Mary Convent and aspire to create a new purpose for the building. One that the Felician Sisters and the Livonia community will be proud of," said Fox.

The Felician Sisters of North America are a contemplative-active order inspired by the spiritual ideals of St. Francis of Assisi and the congregation's foundress, Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska. The Felician Sisters were founded in Poland in 1855 and were first called to North America in 1874.

The North American Felician congregation has ministered in the Livonia area for more than eight decades. The congregation's leadership is based in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, with ministries in the United States, Canada and Haiti.

Article highlights Omaha congregation in transition

A recent piece in the Omaha-based independent [Flatwater Free Press](#) highlighted the [Servants of Mary](#) in Omaha, Nebraska, as the congregation prepares to move some of its members from its 99-year-old convent into senior housing facilities, and eventually toward the order's completion.

The [June 6 article](#) by journalist Kevin Warneke noted that the congregation, which founded [Marian High School](#) in Omaha, and whose members are called "Servites," is down to 50 members in the U.S. There are only 21 sisters living in the convent, and when the time comes, Warneke reported, the high school will assume ownership and operations of the nearly 60,000-square-foot building.

The report said the high school bought the convent from the order in 2019 and will make a final payment in September.



[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Marian High School (@omahamarian)

"Eventually, when the community's last member dies, it will mark the end of the order's presence in North America," the report said. The 21 Servites living at the convent are its final residents.

The article noted that the transition is the congregation's "final act" and that the sisters are "at peace with it."

"I am sure all of us thought we would like to live here, make our vows here, celebrate our Jubilees here, die here," said Sr. Jackie Ryan, who heads the order's

leadership team. "That was not going to be."

"This is what it is and what we must do," said Sr. M. Peter Caito, 87, who joined the Servites in 1955.

Founded in 1892 in Indiana, the congregation became part of a westward expansion that included Nebraska. In Omaha, the article noted, the congregation opened several schools, including Marian, as well as expanding its motherhouse.

The year 1968 was a peak for the congregation, with 268 members. Today, the article said, 50 Servites reside in the U.S., seven in Canada and two in Jamaica. The congregation has become contemplative.

"There was at first emotion: grief, fear, wondering," Ryan said. "In the course of the past two years, we've moved to: 'this is something we accept.' "

That has impressed Michele Ernst, the president of the all girls' high school.

"These women are in charge," Ernst said. "They have a plan, and they are in the driver's seat — as they've earned the right to be. They've gotten out in front of what they know is coming."