



July 6, 2023

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

*Via Email*

RE: Request for Investigation into Recent Instances of Transporting Asylum Seekers Across State Lines by Means of Fraud or Deceit

Dear Attorney General Garland,

Over the last nine months, individuals seeking asylum in the United States were transported from Texas to Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, and to Sacramento, California, under a program funded by the State of Florida.

It is not uncommon for local jurisdictions and nongovernmental organizations to facilitate onward travel from the border for people to connect with family or friends elsewhere in the United States after they are processed and released by federal immigration officials and are pursuing their immigration cases as required by the law. But this scheme is different: according to news reports, recruiters deceived migrants into taking flights to these particular locations based on promises of jobs and shelter.

Bexar County Sheriff Javier Salazar launched an investigation into the September 2022 Martha's Vineyard flight. Results of the investigation have concluded that individuals were induced to accept free travel based on false representations that they would be transported from San Antonio to Martha's Vineyard and receive housing, education, and employment opportunities. A referral for potential criminal prosecution is currently pending with the Bexar County District Attorney's Office.

Recent reporting by the *Los Angeles Times* and other outlets indicates that some individuals who traveled to Sacramento on June 2 and 5, 2023, may have been similarly induced by deceptive representations about access to jobs, housing, or other services. The California Department of Justice has opened criminal and civil investigations into the circumstances around those flights.

Although separate investigations into potential violations of state laws remain active, the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) has a unique capability to investigate cases where, as here, the scheme stretches from Massachusetts to California and touches upon no fewer than five states. Accordingly, we urge the USDOJ to open federal criminal and civil investigations into these incidents. Indeed, as noted in prior correspondence from Governor Newsom to USDOJ related to the Martha's Vineyard flight, given the multijurisdictional, interstate nature of this ongoing scheme, the federal government's involvement seems especially appropriate.

It is unconscionable to use people as political props by persuading them to travel to another state based on false or deceptive representations. We urge USDOJ to investigate potential violations of federal law by those involved in this scheme. We stand ready to provide additional information about these flights and look forward to working with the USDOJ on this issue.  
Sincerely,



GAVIN NEWSOM  
Governor of California



ROB BONTA  
Attorney General



JAVIER SALAZAR  
Bexar County Sheriff