Dear Mr. Secretary:

As religious leaders and faith-based organizations across the United States representing diverse faith traditions and beliefs, we write to express our deep concern about the targeted detention and deportation of Black migrants, and the expulsions of Haitians at the border under policies carried over from the previous administration, especially as we celebrate Black History Month. With every deportation and expulsion flight, we are placing lives at risk and abdicating from our moral and legal obligations to provide protection. We urge you to take immediate action to save Black migrants' lives by exercising your authority to halt deportation flights and stop expelling Haitians under Title 42.

We welcomed and celebrated President Biden’s January 21, 2021, Executive Order and Acting Secretary of DHS Pekoske’s memo directing ICE to comply with a 100-day moratorium on deportations and setting a meaningful shift in enforcement priorities. These actions send a message that we are turning a page, moving away from policies born of racism and xenophobia that violate migrants’ rights, toward a human-centered approach that honors the dignity of all people. We know that Black migrants are disproportionately locked up in our immigration jails, abused, and forced out of the country with little to no access to justice. The Biden administration’s shift in immigration priorities and imposing a 100-day moratorium on deportations gave those we care for a reprieve from being sent to countries they do not know, or where their lives are in danger.

We are deeply dismayed that expulsions and deportation flights have not ceased. Lawfully, DHS can act to right a preventable wrong and immediately stop all deportation and expulsion flights that are scheduled to go to Haiti, Jamaica, Cameroon, Angola, and to other unstable nations. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) flights are death flights and the individuals that have been sent back to Haiti, Somalia, Cameroon, Mauritania, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among other nations, have had their human, legal, and civil rights violated. The Guardian spoke to some migrants brutally mistreated by ICE:

Cameroonian asylum seekers who they said were tortured by being forced to approve their own deportations. The asylum seekers described being forced to the floor and having their fingers inked and pressed on to deportation documents they had refused to sign.

The recent halt of a deportation flight to Africa, in recognition of the need to investigate serious allegations of coercion and abuse from immigrants slated for deportation, was welcomed. However, deportations and expulsions to Jamaica, Haiti, and other unstable nations continue. The Miami Herald reports that the Biden Administration is in the process of deporting 1,800 Haitians, including families with children.

Continuing these policies is reprehensible. The clear targeting and prioritization of Black migrants for deportation after the Biden Administration has also made a point of imbuing U.S. government policies with racial equity—and now, during Black History Month—makes this decision all the more incomprehensible.

Our diverse faith traditions teach us the importance of not just welcoming, but also caring for, the most vulnerable people living among us. Jewish tradition calls on us to welcome the stranger, to treat immigrants fairly, and to empathize with the widow, the stranger, and the orphan because we ourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt.
In “A Prayer for Cameroon and the Cameroonian People,” Valery Nodem of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) writes: Lord our God, we raise our voices to you and pray for your people affected by the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Violence in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon over the past few years has left families in mourning, destroyed communities, limited access to education for hundreds of thousands of young people, and plunged millions of people into despair. Those who have managed to flee the violence to seek refuge, asylum and security in the United States are brutally pushed back and sent back to Cameroon. Protect those who have been...sent back to the same crisis, we pray. Amen.

Protect those who have been sent back, and stop expulsions and deportations. This is the moral, ethical, and humane thing to do.

Sincerely,