

What Happens If the Border Funding Bill Fails?

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When the White House wants Congress to pass legislation, it normally talks about all the bad things that will happen if Congress doesn't act. But with efforts failing to pass an emergency spending bill to address the surge in child migration, the administration was unable to point to specific consequences.

Asked this week what the practical effect of the failure would be, White House Press Secretary **Josh Earnest** referred reporters to individual agencies. "We are hopeful that Congress will take the kind of action that is required," he said.

So what did those agencies have to say?

The Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for caring for children in shelters while they work to place them with sponsors in the U.S., where they will await immigration hearings. An HHS spokesman said that without the funding—and without "extraordinary measures"—HHS would be "unable to set up more stable, cost-effective arrangements for these children." But it did not say that the agency would be unable to care for children.

A spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security said that the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency will run out of money in mid-August and the Customs and Border Protection service will run out in mid-September, forcing DHS to divert money from elsewhere in the department. But it, too, did not cite any particular consequences.

This may be partly because the number of children apprehended at the border has fallen dramatically from its peak in June. For instance, senior administration officials said last week that HHS no longer has an urgent need to open new shelters, which was one of the major funding requests.

On Wednesday, the outlook for a resolution in Congress remained poor. In the Senate, a \$2.7 billion Democratic bill cleared an early procedural hurdle on a 63-33 vote, but it is likely to be blocked by Republicans later this week.

The House is expected to pass its own border bill on Thursday, but Congress is unlikely to reach any agreement before lawmakers depart this week for their five-week August recess. Senate Democrats have not indicated they are considering any other options this week for dealing with the border crisis.

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