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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

The migrant crisis: Yes, you can help

There's been no shortage of news stories lately showing, with horrific clarity, the inhumane conditions at the US-Mexico border.

As scores of migrants, adults, and children flee the poverty and violence in Central America in hope of seeking asylum in the United States, some of those minors are being forced to sleep on concrete floors, or in the midst of a lice infestation or influenza outbreak, in overcrowded, filthy, and inadequate federal facilities at the Southern border. Oh, but it's perfectly fine, government officials argued recently before a federal appeals court, to deny basic sanitary care, like toothbrushes and soap, to migrant children in their care. On Tuesday, it was the tragedy of a Salvadoran father who drowned in the Rio Grande with his 23-month-old daughter that captured the nation's attention and indignation.

It's one of the reasons why more than 500 employees at Wayfair, the successful Boston-based home goods company, petitioned the company to cancel a \$200,000 order for bedroom furniture to outfit a migrant shelter in Texas and to cease doing business with its operator, BCFS, a nonprofit contractor managing migrant camps. Executives responded respectfully and did not cancel, on the principle of serving and respecting "a broad and diverse customer base." On Wednesday, some employees held a short mid-day walkout as the company announced a donation to the Red Cross. Employees participating in the walkout stressed their love of their company, but expressed their disgust with current border policies.

One can agree or disagree with Wayfair or its employees. But the underlying fact remains: The Central American migrant crisis at the border is causing widespread outrage and moving Americans to do *something* about it. After all, the crisis doesn't begin and end at the border. As others have pointed out, there are concrete actions indignant Americans can pursue to make a difference here and now.

Where to have the most impact? Here's a partial list of local nonprofits that are at the front line of the migrant crisis in Massachusetts and

would welcome assistance:

- **Centro Presente** In the past week alone, the Boston-based nonprofit has received assistance requests from families of 10 migrant children from Central America who arrived in the area after being in detention at the border, according to Patricia Montes, executive director of the organization. She said in an interview that the biggest needs are monetary donations for hiring more personnel as the cases multiply. Her second biggest need is for more immigration attorneys who are willing to offer pro bono services.

- **Beyond** A relatively young organization, Beyond is a network of volunteers that offers a wide range of support services to immigrants in Massachusetts who are in detention or at risk of deportation. The group has a bond and legal-assistance fund, and also offers short-term housing to help to immigrants who have just been released from local detention facilities. Notably, Beyond welcomes volunteers who are willing to assist with such tasks as picking up immigrants from detention, driving them to immigration court, or even serving as a companion in court appointments, a not inconsequential act of support and solidarity.

- **Lawyers for Civil Rights** Through aggressive legal action, Lawyers for Civil Rights has repeatedly challenged the anti-immigrant policies of the Trump administration. For instance, the Boston-based organization has sued the federal government to get compensation for local families affected by the government's child-separation policy last year. The nonprofit has also acted as a facilitator for meetings between local elected officials and Central American migration experts to promote a better understanding of the factors pushing families to migrate. Lawyers for Civil Rights welcomes donations as well as attorneys who are willing to contribute pro bono services.

That's just a small sample of the work local organizations are doing as it relates to the crisis at the border. There are many ways to help out. Activism doesn't have to take the form of protesting, or even writing a big check or an outraged letter to your representative in Congress. Small acts can have a huge impact.