

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Republican Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

August 21, 2019

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer:

The undersigned organizations, which are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and the well-being of children, write to express our grave concern with the ongoing treatment of children at the United States border. As child welfare advocates with expertise in the impact of trauma on children, we are deeply alarmed by the reports of government-sanctioned conditions and separations, which knowingly expose children to emotional abuse and physical injury and draw clear comparisons to child abuse. We urge Congress and the Administration to immediately end these abusive acts toward children.

Despite an official end to the Administration's Zero Tolerance Policy, recent reports have made clear that the federal government continues to separate children from parents and other caregivers with whom they arrive, including aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins. Reports have also made clear that the standard of risk needed to justify a child's separation from a caregiver is often not being met; therefore, the government's actions are decidedly not in the best interest of the child and causing serious emotional harm. These ongoing separations are unjustified, unlawful, and deeply detrimental to children's well-being.

Separation, detention, cages, deplorable physical and hygiene conditions, bullying and intimidation by guards, and being held in enormous institutional facilities reflect traumatic practices in direct conflict with what science tells us about healthy child development. Traumatic experiences, toxic stress, and prolonged exposure to unsafe conditions, like those children are experiencing in ICE and CBP custody, have lifelong consequences for children. The U.S. government must stop intentionally subjecting children to these experiences, separating children from parents and caregivers, and holding them in conditions of confinement that violate state child abuse statutes across the country.

It is unconscionable that the federal government would sanction conditions of confinement for children that can be equated to child abuse as part of any policy. For both U.S.-born children and immigrant children, the government has a responsibility to ensure safety and prevent an unreasonable risk of harm. The current policies at the border do not meet this minimal standard.

We urge the Administration take swift action to ensure children are never detained for more than 72 hours in CBP facilities and to ensure that all CBP facilities that temporarily house children provide safe conditions that do not expose children to an unreasonable risk of physical or mental harm. We also call on the U.S. Congress to take swift action if the Administration will not. The members of this Coalition are ready and eager to join with the Administration and the U.S. Congress to consider how to best achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities  
American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children  
American Psychological Association  
Boys Town  
Buffett Early Childhood Fund  
Center for the Study of Social Policy  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children's Advocacy Institute  
Children's Defense Fund  
Children's Law Center  
Committee for Children  
DC Alliance of Youth Advocates  
Educare Learning Network  
Family Focused Treatment Association  
First Five Years Fund  
First Focus on Children  
Foster America  
International Social Service, USA  
Juvenile Law Center  
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership  
National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Center for Youth Law  
National Child Abuse Coalition  
National Children's Alliance  
National Family Support Network  
National Foster Parent Association  
National Foundation to End Child Abuse and Neglect  
National Network for Youth  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Respite Coalition  
National Youth Advocate Program, Inc.  
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies  
North American Council on Adoptable Children  
Ounce of Prevention Fund  
Parents Anonymous Inc  
Prevent Child Abuse America  
Ray Helfer Society  
Rights4Girls  
The Washington Children's Foundation  
Voice for Adoption  
Within Our Reach  
Youth Villages  
Zero to Three

Alaska

Alaska's Children Trust

Arizona

Child and Family Resources, Inc.  
Human Services Consultants, LLC

### California

A Greater Hope  
Advokids  
Alternative Family Services  
Aviva Family & Children's Service  
California Alliance of Child and Family Services  
California Family Resource Association  
Children Now  
Cope Family Center  
Family Care Network, Inc.  
Five Acres  
Futuro Infantil Hispano, FFA  
Hathaway-Sycamores  
Legal Services for Children  
Safe & Sound  
Saving Innocence  
Temple Beth El  
The Village Family Services

### Colorado

Illuminate Colorado

### Connecticut

Child & Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut  
Children's Community Programs of Connecticut

### Delaware

Children & Families First

### Florida

Florida's Children First  
Southern Legal Counsel, Inc.

### Georgia

CHRIS 180  
Hillside, Inc.

### Iowa

Families First Counseling Services

### Idaho

Idaho Children's Trust Fund/Prevent Child Abuse Idaho

### Illinois

Alternative Schools Network  
Children's Home & Aid  
DuPage Early Childhood Collaboration  
Erikson Institute  
EverThrive Illinois  
Illinois Action for Children  
Illinois Collaboration on Youth  
Kaleidoscope  
One Hope United  
Peoria County Bright Futures  
SEIU Healthcare

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions  
YWCA Metropolitan Chicago

Indiana

Family Service Society, Inc.  
Prevent Child Abuse Indiana  
The Phoenix Institute  
The Villages

Kansas

Children's Alliance of Kansas  
EmberHope Youthville  
FosterAdopt Connect  
Kansas Appleseed

Louisiana

Kingsley House

Massachusetts

Ascentria Care Alliance  
Children's League of Massachusetts  
Children's Trust, Inc.  
HopeWell  
Massachusetts Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children  
North American Family Institute  
Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps

Maryland

Center for Adoption Support and Education  
Maryland Essentials for Childhood  
Maryland State Council on Child Abuse & Neglect  
Prevent Child Abuse Maryland/The Family Tree  
Prince George's County DSS  
Prince George's Child Resource Center  
Sweet Sorrel

Maine

Maine Children's Trust  
Volunteers of America Northern New England

Michigan

Bethany Christian Services  
Catholic Social Services of the Upper Peninsula  
Child Advocacy Program  
Child and Family Charities  
Child and Family Services Northeast Michigan  
Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan  
D.A. Blodgett-St. John's  
Family & Children Services  
Family Builders Network  
Fostering Futures  
Hope Network Behavioral Health Services  
Livingston County Catholic Charities  
Methodist Children's Home Society  
Michigan Children's Trust Fund  
Michigan Federation for Children and Families

Ruth Ellis Center, Inc.  
Spaulding for Children  
Starr Commonwealth  
Teaching Family Homes of Upper Michigan  
Wedgwood Christian Services  
West Michigan Partnership for Children

Minnesota

Ampersand Families  
AspireMN  
Minnesota Communities Caring for Children, Home of Prevent Child Abuse MN  
West Central Initiative

Missouri

FosterAdopt Connect  
Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies

Montana

Prevent Child Abuse Montana

Nebraska

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation  
Voices for Children in Nebraska

New Jersey

Advocates for Children of New Jersey  
Cornerstone Family Programs  
Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless  
New Dover United Methodist Church  
New Jersey Alliance for Children Youth and Families  
Partnering for Prevention, LLC  
Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey  
Visions and Pathways  
Zion Lutheran Church

New Mexico

All Faiths Children's Advocacy Center  
The City of Albuquerque

Nevada

Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada

New York

Catholic Guardian Services  
Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (NYS)  
Family and Children's Association  
Family Service Society, Inc.  
Ibero American Action League  
Prevent Child Abuse New York  
The Children's Village  
United Neighborhood Houses

North Carolina

The Together Facing the Challenge Program  
Child Care Services Association  
NC Child  
Thompson Child and Family Focus

Ohio

Adoption Network Cleveland

Oklahoma

Policy & Performance Consultants, Inc.

Oregon

Child & Family Advocacy Clinic  
Children First for Oregon  
Children's Institute  
FosterClub  
Hacienda CDC  
Old Mill Center for Children and Families  
Parenting Now!  
Pearl Buck Center  
Prevent Child Abuse Oregon  
Yachats Youth & Family Activities Program, Inc.

Pennsylvania

Auberle  
Delta Community Supports  
Family Services of Montgomery County  
Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research  
Harborcreek Youth Services  
Jewish Family and Children Services  
Outreach Center for Community Resources  
Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth & Family Services  
Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance  
Philadelphia Nurse-Family Partnership  
Pinebrook Family Answers  
Pressley Ridge  
Union City Family Support Center

Puerto Rico

Proyecto Nacer, Inc.

Rhode Island

Adoption Rhode Island  
Child & Family  
Community Care Alliance  
Foster Forward  
Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families  
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Tennessee

Omni Visions, Inc.

Texas

DFW Foster Parent Association  
Ella Austin Community Center  
Praesidium

Sequel Youth and Family Services  
TexProtects  
Texas Pediatric Society, Texas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Virginia

Braley & Thompson and Kids in Focus  
City of Richmond, Department of Social Services  
Families Forward/Prevent Child Abuse Virginia  
Lutheran Family Services of Virginia

Vermont

Prevent Child Abuse Vermont

Washington

Children's Home Society of Washington  
Community and Family Services Foundation  
HopeSparks Family Services  
Partners for Our Children  
Washington Association for Children and Families

West Virginia

TEAM for West Virginia Children / Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia  
West Virginia Child Care Association

Wisconsin

The Social Development Commission  
Wisconsin Association of Family & Children's Agencies  
Wisconsin Early Childhood Association