

July 21, 2011

RE: Support for the Humane Enforcement and Legal Protections (HELP) for Separated Children Act

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to support the Humane Enforcement and Legal Protections (HELP) for Separated Children Act, legislation introduced by Senator Franken (D-MN) and Representative Woolsey (D-CA-6). Though the bills differ slightly, both would implement much needed reforms in existing protocols to protect children, families and communities from the unintended consequences of immigration enforcement.

Enforcement activities conducted by the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency ("ICE") and local law enforcement agencies operating under agreement with ICE too often result in collateral damage. In recent years, ICE has arrested and detained hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom have U.S. citizen children. Parents and caregivers who are detained are separated from their children, sometimes permanently, and always at great cost to the well-being of the child, the family, and the community.

Currently, when ICE or its surrogates apprehend a parent or caregiver, there is no requirement that they be given the opportunity to make childcare arrangements. If parents and caregivers are detained, there is no requirement that they be informed of the location of their children, permitted to communicate with child welfare agencies, able to comply with reunification plans or able to participate in family court proceedings. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that detained parents will have sufficient time and access prior to deportation to obtain travel documents for their children. As a result, many parents and caregivers who are deported are unable to arrange for their children to join them in their home country. Unnecessary separations of children from their parents threaten the child's safety, security and long-term development and should be avoided wherever possible.

The HELP for Separated Children Act would establish nationwide protocols to ensure that parents and caregivers apprehended during immigration enforcement are identified and treated with special concern for the well-being of their minor children. They would also prevent children from unnecessary placement in foster care while their parent's or caregiver's immigration case is pending.

Specifically, the bills require that ICE and its surrogates follow certain procedures to determine whether apprehended individuals have children or dependents in the United States. If individuals are believed to be parents or caregivers, ICE would be required to consider the best interest of children in decisions to detain the parent or caregiver and to facilitate parents' and caregivers' ability to make childcare arrangements, if necessary.

The bills would also establish procedures to ensure that detained parents are able to participate in family court proceedings and would improve coordination and communication between all the entities involved in the care and custody of separated children. Additionally, they would ensure that detained parents can comply with family court orders, reunification plans and other custody-related requirements. Furthermore, the bills would ensure that detained parents and caregivers are allowed regular telephone contact and visitation with their children, and can access attorneys and consular staff before they sign legal documents. The HELP for Separated Children Act would also require that detained parents and caregivers have the time and ability to obtain necessary travel documents so that they can bring their child to their home country if they are deported. Finally, the bills would require the federal government to document the impact of immigration enforcement activities on children and families through an annual report.

These procedures and safeguards are necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of all children. They will save taxpayers millions of dollars by reducing the number of children who are unnecessarily placed into the foster care system and will improve the likelihood that children of detained parents will be able to reunify with their parents upon their release or deportation.

The federal government's current apprehension methods and detention and removal policies have resulted in traumatized children and broken families. We therefore urge you to support the HELP for Separated Children Act to restore our nation's commitment to child welfare and family values.

Sincerely,

## **NATIONAL**

American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO  
American Humane Association  
American Immigration Lawyers Association  
American Jewish Committee  
American Muslim Voice Foundation  
America's Promise Alliance  
America's Voice Education Fund  
Amnesty International USA  
Applied Research Center  
Asian American Justice Center, Member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice  
Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)  
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc.  
The Episcopal Church  
Families for Freedom  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Foster Family-based Treatment Association  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

Human Rights Watch  
Immigrant Child Advocacy Project, University of Chicago  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
Immigration Equality  
Irish Apostolate USA  
Jewish Labor Committee, Western Region  
Kids In Need of Defense (KIND)  
Legal Momentum  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office  
MomsRising  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Assembly on School-Based Health Care  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
National Consumers League  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of La Raza  
National Education Association  
National Immigrant Justice Center  
National Immigration Forum  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Justice Lobby  
Pax Christi USA  
Rights Working Group  
SEIU  
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)  
United We Dream  
Voices for America's Children  
Women's Refugee Commission  
ZERO TO THREE

## **LOCAL & STATE ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Arizona**

Arizona Council of Human Service Providers  
Children's Action Alliance  
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project  
Ginger Ward Southwest Human Development  
Goldman & Goldman, PC

**California**

California Rural Legal Association Foundation  
Children Now  
Children's Rights Project, Public Counsel, UCLA School of Law  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of LA (CHIRLA)  
East Bay Community Law Center  
Immigrant Rights Project, Public Counsel, UCLA School of Law  
Korean Resource Center  
Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights, San Francisco  
Legal Services for Children, San Francisco  
Youth Law Center, San Francisco

**Colorado**

Servicios de La Raza

**District of Columbia**

Ayuda  
Latin American Youth Center

**Florida**

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center  
Florida Immigrant Coalition  
Law Offices of Linda Friedman Ramirez, PA  
Miami-Dade Green Party

**Georgia**

Georgia Rural Urban Summit

**Illinois**

8<sup>th</sup> Day Center for Justice, Chicago  
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition  
Korean American Resource & Cultural Center  
Project IRENE  
Scott D. Pollock & Associates, P.C.

**Maine**

Maine Children's Alliance

**Maryland**

Advocates for Children and Youth  
Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers

**Massachusetts**

Boston University School of Law, Civil Litigation Program  
Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project

## **Michigan**

Immigration Law Clinic, Michigan State University College of Law  
Michigan's Children

## **Minnesota**

Advocates for Human Rights  
American Immigration Lawyers Association – Minnesota/Dakotas Chapter  
Benedictine-Franciscan Immigrant Justice Committee  
Casa Guadalupana Catholic Worker House  
Catholic Charities of St. Paul & Minneapolis  
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud  
Centro Campensino  
Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota  
Children's Law Center of Minnesota  
Church of All Nations  
Church of Christ  
Church of the Ascension  
Education Minnesota  
El Milagro Lutheran Church - Church Council and Congregation  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America - Northeast Minnesota Synod Task Force on Immigration  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America - Saint Paul Area Synod  
The Family Partnership  
Hmong American Partnership  
Hospitality Minnesota  
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota  
Interfaith Coalition on Immigration MN (ICOM)  
Islamic Civic Society of America  
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action  
Jewish Community Action (JCA)  
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation  
Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy in Minnesota  
Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota  
Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers  
Mid-Minnesota Legal Assistance  
Midwest Food Processors Association  
Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights  
Minnesota AFL-CIO  
Minnesota Agri-Growth Council  
Minnesota Alliance With Youth  
Minnesota Business Immigration Coalition  
Minnesota Catholic Conference  
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce  
Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ - Justice and Witness Team  
Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ - Immigration Task Force  
Minnesota Council of Churches

Minnesota Lodging Association  
Minnesota Milk Producers Association  
Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association  
Minnesota Restaurant Association  
Minnesota School Social Workers Association  
Mobilizing and Organizing for Victory and Empowerment (MOVE)  
No More Children Left Behind  
Peace and Hope International  
Project for Pride in Living  
Service Employees International Union - Local 26  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates - Immigration Working Group  
Somali Action Alliance  
St. Bridget/St. Bernard Catholic Churches - Social Justice Team of the Greater Stewartville Area  
St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church  
St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Church  
St. Luke Presbyterian Church - Peace and Justice Focus Group  
United Food & Commercial Workers Union – Local 6 (Albert Lea)  
United Food & Commercial Workers Union – Local 9 (Austin)  
United Food & Commercial Workers Union – Local 1161 (Worthington)  
United Food & Commercial Workers Union - Local 1189 (St. Paul & Duluth)  
UNITE-HERE – State Council  
Willmar Area Comprehensive Immigration Reform  
Witness for Peace-Upper Midwest

***Minnesota Faith, Civic and Community Leaders and Advocates:***

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Anne Attea, Minneapolis, MN  
Aviva Breen, Minneapolis, MN  
B. Tovao, Saint Paul, MN  
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Barbara Pilling, Saint Paul, MN  
Barbara Thomalla, Servants of Mary, Vadnais Heights, MN  
Becky Flory, Saint Paul, MN  
Belle Scott, Minneapolis MN  
Benjamin P. Masters, Minneapolis, MN  
Bob Englund, Richfield, MN  
Brad Folsom, Lakeville, MN  
Brent Polhemus, Lakeville, MN  
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Carol Masters, Minneapolis, MN  
Charles P. Lutz, Minneapolis, MN  
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Chief Tom Smith, Police Department, City of St. Paul, MN  
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Maureen Day, Minneapolis, MN  
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Rabbi Amy Eilberg, Jay Phillips Center for Jewish-Christian Learning, MN  
Rabbi Avi Olitzky, Beth El Synagogue, MN  
Rabbi David Lockets, Bet Shalom Congregation, MN  
Rabbi Harold Kravitz, Adath Jeshurun, MN  
Rabbi Michael Latz, Shir Tikvah Congregation, MN  
Rabbi Morris J. Allen, Beth Jacob Congregation, MN  
Rabbi Norman Cohen, Bet Shalom Congregation, MN  
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Randy Genrich, Minneapolis, MN  
Rebecca Flory, Saint Paul, MN  
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Reverend Dr. Karen Smith Sellers, Conference Minister, Minnesota Conference United Church, of Christ, Minneapolis, MN  
Reverend Duane Addison, Fridley, MN  
Reverend John Guttermann, United Church of Christ pastor, New Brighton, MN  
Reverend Jonathan Zielske, Hope Lutheran Church, ELCA, Saint Paul, MN  
Reverend Judith VanOsdol, Pastor, El Milagro Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, MN  
Reverend Matthew Hunter, Executive Director, Community Shares of Minnesota, MN  
Reverend Naomi Mahler, Willmar, MN  
Reverend Paula Bidle, Minneapolis, MN  
Reverend Randall J. Romsdahl, Shakopee, MN  
Reverend Richard Wagner, Saint Louis Park, MN  
Reverend Robert Munneke, Aitkin, MN  
Reverend Susan Maetzold Moss, The Episcopal Church in Minnesota, MN  
Reverend Michael Rock, Pastor and Teacher, Robbinsdale UCC, MN  
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Rita Quigley, Saint Paul, MN  
Robert H. Scarlett, Lino Lakes, MN  
Robert Scott, Minneapolis, MN  
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Sally Dyck, Resident Bishop of Minnesota, United Methodist Church, MN  
Sandy Dodson, Roseville, MN

Sarah Nokes-Malach, M.A., Minneapolis, MN  
Scott Galbraith, Minneapolis, MN  
Shirley Poliquin., Minneapolis, MN  
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Sister Joan Groschen, MN  
Sister Pat Binka, MN  
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Steve Marquardt, Lake Lillian, MN  
Susan Campe, Minneapolis, MN  
Susan George, Minneapolis, MN  
Susan Kolze, Minneapolis, MN  
Susan Mullin, Brooklyn Park, MN  
Susan P. Stemme, Richfield, MN  
Susan Schirber, Minneapolis, MN  
Theresa Winter, Apply Valley, MN  
Thomas B. Major, Minneapolis, MN  
Thomas McCarthy, Minneapolis, MN  
Thomas W. Haines, Eden Prairie, MN  
Trish Parry, Minneapolis, MN  
Trudy Genrich, Minneapolis, MN  
Vic Rosenthal, Executive Director, Jewish Community Action, MN  
Vicki Wunsch, Minneapolis, MN  
William Forsman, Eagan, MN  
William Smith, Minneapolis, MN

### **New Jersey**

Casa Esperanza  
IRATE & First Friends  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network

### **New Mexico**

New Mexico Women's Justice Project  
New Mexico Voices for Children  
PB&J Family Services, Inc., Albuquerque  
Women's Intercultural Center

### **New York**

Coalition for Asian American Children and Families  
New Sanctuary Coalition of New York City  
New York Immigration Coalition

### **North Carolina**

Action for Children North Carolina

**Oregon**

CASA Voices for Children  
Children First for Oregon

**Pennsylvania**

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) of Pennsylvania  
Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center

**Tennessee**

The Black Children's Institute of Tennessee

**Texas**

Center for Public Policy Priorities  
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas  
Wilco Justice Alliance

**Utah**

Voices for Utah Children

**Virginia**

Voices for Virginia's Children

**Washington**

Children's Home Society of Washington