



FIRST FOCUS CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN

June 25, 2014

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, I would like to express our grave concern with the letter to President Obama circulated earlier this week by Congressman Darrell Issa requesting that the Administration “end policies encouraging the border surge.” We believe Congressman Issa’s proposal to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program as a solution to address the recent influx of Central American child migrant is misguided, irresponsible, and will only result in harm to children. We urge you to reject this proposal.

There is no doubt that the recent influx of unaccompanied children across the Southern border represents a humanitarian crisis that requires immediate action. However, we believe that proposals that target children and cause them harm only distract from the urgent need to ensure that we are protecting the extremely vulnerable children who are seeking refuge in U.S. and finding long-term solutions to address the complex reasons driving their migration. Congressman’s Issa’s proposal to end the DACA program, which has provided relief to thousands of undocumented children who have grown up in this country and consider it their home, is mean-spirited and misguided. Furthermore, it is simply wrong to label children who are DACA beneficiaries and unaccompanied minors who have experienced serious trauma as “lawbreakers.”

Congressman’s Issa’s proposal also undermines the fact that the recent influx of Central American children is largely driven by incredibly dangerous conditions in their home countries. According to extensive research including a recent report by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the majority of newly arriving children are escaping extreme violence and instability, spurred by increased drug trafficking and gang activity in Central America. It is also important to note that the increase in child migrants is impacting other countries, not just the United States. Contiguous countries to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras such as Mexico, Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Belize have also seen a dramatic increase in the number of child asylum-seekers from Central America. While misinformation regarding lenient U.S. policies may be one of the factors motivating children and families to undertake the dangerous journey to our country, to suggest that policies like DACA are the primary reason for the influx in child refugees ignores the urgent need to address the larger, complex factors forcing children to flee.

As an organization dedicated to promoting the safety and well-being of children, we urge you to reject Congressman Issa’s proposal. Rather than attacking children and pitting one vulnerable set of youth against another, Congress should be working towards solutions to protect the best interests of all children in the United States.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley
President