

February 18, 2020

The Honorable Veronica Escobar
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Escobar:

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, I am writing to thank you for your leadership in introducing H.R. 2662, the Asylum Seeker Protection Act.

The legislation would defund the Trump Administration's "Remain in Mexico" or Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) policy, which began on January 29, 2019, and denies asylum seekers of due process and endangers their safety and well-being. The most recent reports are that U.S. officials have turned away and sent more than 59,000 people to Mexico, including more than 16,000 children, to wait on a court date.

In interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch (HRW), Stanford University's Human Rights in Trauma Mental Health Program, and Willamette University's Child and Family Advocacy Clinic, families subjected to the policy said that while waiting in Mexico, they or their children were "beaten, harassed, sexually assaulted, or abducted." Some parents reported that Mexican police had harassed or extorted money from them and that they were "constantly fearful and easily identified as targets for violence."

According to HRW, "Asylum seekers interviewed said they or their children had been violently attacked, robbed at knifepoint, or extorted in Ciudad Juárez, Matamoros, Mexicali, Nuevo Laredo, and Tijuana while transiting through these cities before they sought asylum, or after US officials sent them to those cities. Three families said they had been abducted for ransom, in Nuevo Laredo; one family for eight days. Four families said their children had been sexually assaulted after U.S. officials sent them to Mexico."

The Administration policy is causing children, who were fleeing violence, to be subjected to further danger, violence, and harm by our own government. This must end immediately.

Consequently, we urge Congress to take up and pass H.R. 2662 to stop the Trump Administration's continued implementation of their cruel, inhumane, and illegal policy that denies asylum seekers, including thousands of children, basic human rights protections and a fair asylum process.

We applaud your leadership in standing up to this cruel and misguided rule and look forward to working with you to help advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President