

July 21, 2014

*U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C.20510*

*U.S. Representative Dave Reichert  
1127 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C.20515*

*U.S. Senator Patty Murray  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C.20510*

*U.S. Representative Jim McDermott  
1035 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C.20515*

*U.S. Representative Suzan DelBene  
318 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C.20515*

*U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer  
1429 Longworth House Office Building  
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*U.S. Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
203 Cannon House Office Building  
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*U.S. Representative Denny Heck  
425 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C.20515*

*U.S. Representative Doc Hastings  
1203 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C.20515*

*U.S. Representative Rick Larsen  
2113 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C.20515*

*U.S. Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler  
1130 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C.20515*

*U.S. Representative Adam Smith  
2264 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C.20515*

Dear Honorable Senators and Representatives of Washington State,

We, the undersigned human rights, immigration, labor, faith, criminal justice, children's rights, and civil liberties organizations, write to urge you to oppose increased deportation efforts and the opening of new immigrant family detention centers as responses to the current humanitarian situation involving unaccompanied minors traveling from Central America. Instead, make the funding and support of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) a top priority.

We are alarmed by the growing humanitarian crisis along our nation's southern border and the lack of effective action taken by President Obama and Congress. We are concerned by the proposal for new family detention centers. Family detention does not reflect American values of justice, equity, and humanitarianism. Locking families up, some with toddlers, is inhumane.

Recent experience with this policy option suggests that alternatives must be pursued. In 2009, lawsuits exposed poor living conditions in the T. Don Hutto Residential Center in Taylor, Texas, which forced the facility to stop holding families. **Spending public resources on the placement of families in facilities that equate to jail is not financially, morally, or pragmatically sound public policy.** Concurrently, the expansion of private prisons, such as the facility in Adelanto, California, is an unnecessary expense that increases detention capacity while doing nothing to provide long-term solutions.

Additionally, **reflexively increasing and expediting deportation efforts will not solve the problem.** Tens of thousands of young Central Americans have arrived at our nation's doorstep for a reason. Simply sending them back to their home nations, which are plagued by violence and economic hardship, will not provide long-term benefits. Throwing more money at border security is

not the sort of long-sighted, innovative policy response that is needed at this time. Proper and timely handling of the immigration trials of young immigrants will allow for those that have a legal claim to enter the U.S. to stay.

President Obama has requested from Congress \$3.7 billion to address needs related to the crisis along the U.S.-Mexico border. We should be focused on ensuring that the children and families now arriving at our borders are able to have full and fair hearings that will enable those who qualify for protection under our law to have access to that protection.

**Ensure that children have access to lawyers and a fair day in court.** Instead of fast-tracking the deportation of vulnerable children and denying them basic due process rights, we urge Congress to increase funding for immigration judges, ensure the appointment of legal counsel for every child facing removal, and expand legal orientation programs.

The President's proposal does not go far enough. The Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) should be adequately funded to hire enough judges and staff to not only provide hearings for children without scheduling delays, but to reduce the existing backlog of approximately 350,000 immigration cases and to reduce the need for video hearings that can curtail children's rights to properly present their cases. If 75 additional judge teams are necessary to ensure each child has an opportunity to appear before an immigration judge, which appears to be the case from the President's supplemental request, then 75 teams should be requested instead of repurposing the 35 new teams already requested for fiscal year 2015.

**Oppose funding for the expansion of family detention.** The practice of holding families in detention centers is inhumane and opens the door for abuses and inappropriate conditions of confinement. Instead, the U.S. should allow families to stay together without the restrictions of detention.

**Commit sufficient resources to the Office of Refugee Resettlement to support both resettled refugees and children who are in U.S. custody.** The ORR serves both immigrants and refugees in their time of need. Congress must not allow the needs of unaccompanied minors to be pitted against the agency's current refugee resettlement activities. The ORR must be appropriated sufficient funds in order to continue its vital refugee services while also attending to the current humanitarian situation driven by the growing caseload of unaccompanied children.

**Do not rollback protections under the Trafficking Victims Protection and Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPRA).** The supplemental request should not be used to diminish existing legal protections for these children. Provisions set forth in the bi-partisan TVPRA, which was unanimously approved in the Senate, must not be compromised. Hard-won, bi-partisan human rights protections must not be undermined in order to fast-track the deportation of vulnerable children.

The TVPRA requires that unaccompanied children from non-contiguous countries be placed in removal proceedings before an immigration court rather than subjected to an expedited screening and repatriation process. By contrast, the expedited process currently in place for Mexican children (who receive reduced TVPRA protections) requires them to attempt to make a claim for protection immediately to an immigration enforcement agent who is not impartial and without even the opportunity to consult with an attorney. This procedure should not be applied to children from non-contiguous countries and should be terminated

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altogether. All children should receive a full and fair hearing with legal representation and full protection under U.S. law to ensure their safety and wellbeing, and to preserve fundamental due process.

**Commit greater resources to address root causes forcing people to flee Central America and seek refuge in the United States.** The President's \$300 million request for funding to address the root causes of the recent influx of children and families seeking refuge is inadequate considering the complex needs in the region. The U.S. should model its response after recommendations by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who called for a comprehensive response aimed at preventing the need for such movement and displacement of children and women from their homes in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

We urge you to join us in pursuing justice and proper care for young unaccompanied minors and immigrant families. They deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

Agate Passage Friends  
Agnus Dei Lutheran Church  
American Immigration Lawyers Association Washington State Chapter  
Asia Pacific Cultural Center  
Asian Coalition for Equality  
Asian Coalition for Equality - University of Washington, Seattle  
Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of King County  
Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Pierce County  
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church  
Bethany Lutheran Church, Bainbridge Is.  
B-town Consulting  
Casa Latina  
Cascade Unitarian Universalist Fellowship  
Catholic Community Services, Tacoma  
Centro Latino  
Children's Alliance  
Chinese Information and Service Center  
Church Council  
Church Council of Greater Seattle  
CIELO  
Columbia City Church of Hope  
Committee for Children  
Community & Middle East Peace Builders  
Community Cafe Leadership Team  
Community to Community Development  
Congregation Beth Shalom  
Consejo Counseling & Referral Service  
Crown Hill United Methodist Church  
Diocese of Olympia  
Eastshore Unitarian Church  
Eastside Latinos

Evangelical Covenant Church  
El Centro de la Raza  
Ellensburg First United Methodist Church`  
Entre Hermanos  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches  
Fairwood Community United Methodist Church  
Faith Action Network  
Fallon International  
Fire Mountain Chapter Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Gethsemane Lutheran Church  
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church  
Green Lake United Methodist Church  
Hillel at the University of Washington  
Iglesia El Amor de Cristo of the Wenatchee First United Methodist Church  
Immanuel Lutheran Congregation  
Indonesian Lutheran Fellowship  
Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center  
International Community Health Services  
Jewish Family Service  
Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle  
Kitsap Immigrant Assistance Center  
KolHaneshamah Temple Youth Group  
KolHaNeshmah Synagogue  
Latina/o Bar Association of Washington  
Latino Community Fund of Washington State  
Latino Education & Training Institute  
Lauren Kurland  
Law Office of Gabriel R Harrison  
Legacy of Equality, Leadership & Organizing  
Libertad Law Group PLLC  
Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd  
Mary Mahoney Prof. Nurses Organization  
Mujeres NW  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum Seattle  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Northlake Unitarian Universalist Church  
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project  
NW Family Services  
OneAmerica  
OPEIU #8  
Org. of Chinese Americans - Greater Seattle  
Para Los Ninos de Highline  
Peace Lutheran Church, Seattle  
Peace Lutheran Fellowship, Pt Ludlow, WA  
Presbyterian Church, USA  
Port Townsend Friends Meeting  
Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action

Refugee & Immigrant Services Northwest  
Refugee Foster Parent  
Ronald UMC  
Ronald United Methodist Church  
SafeFutures Youth Center  
Sea Mar CHC  
Seattle Human Services Coalition  
Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness  
SEIU Healthcare 1199NW  
SEIU Healthcare 775NW  
Shalom Spiritual Resources  
Sisters of Providence  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace  
Solid Ground  
Somos Comunidad  
Sravasti Abbey  
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church  
St. John United Lutheran  
St. Mark's Lutheran Church  
St. Mary Church  
Statewide Poverty Action Network  
Tacoma Community House  
TeamChild  
Temple Beth Am  
Temple Beth El  
Temple Beth Hatfiloh  
Temple Beth Or  
The United Church of Christ  
Transforming Conflict LLC  
Trinity Episcopal Church  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
UFCW Local 21  
Unitarian Universalist Voices for Justice  
Unitarian Universalist Voices for Justice - Washington State  
United Church of Christ  
United Churches of Olympia  
United Methodist Church  
United Methodist Women  
University Baptist Church  
University Congregational UCC  
University Temple United Methodist Church  
University Unitarian Church, Seattle  
Valley & Mountain Fellowship Social Action Team  
Vashon United Methodist Church  
WA Latinos Unite  
Washington Coalition of Rabbis  
Washington Defender Association's Immigration Project  
Washington DREAM Act Coalition

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Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Western Washington Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Woodland Park Presbyterian Church Seattle  
Woodland Park United Methodist Church