

June 20, 2018

The Honorable Jefferson B. Sessions Attorney General U.S. Department of Justice Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen Secretary of Homeland Security Department of Homeland Security Washington, DC 20528

Dear Attorney General Sessions and Secretary Nielsen:

We write to demand you immediately reverse course on the Administration's inhumane decision to separate children from their parents at the border. This policy has traumatized families who are seeking asylum and fleeing violence. The decision to separate children from their parents at the border is cruel, unnecessary, and goes against the fundamental values of America. You should end this policy without delay.

We urge the reversal of any measure that would make it harder for parents or relatives to sponsor children in custody, or for children and their parents to reunite. This "zero tolerance" policy adds to the backlog of deportation cases and legal challenges in federal courts, places thousands of immigrants in detention facilities and shelters, endangers the lives of more children, and instills fear in people seeking safety in our country.

The administration's well-documented decision to use separation as a deterrent is callous and demonstrates its desire to control immigration without concern for the care and protection of migrant children, victims of human trafficking and violence as they escape harsh and dangerous circumstances and seek asylum in the United States. We are deeply concerned that this policy will lead to long-term adverse childhood experiences and trauma. It is, at its core, un-American.

Best practices and ample evidence in child welfare promote keeping children and their parents together. Everyone from the American Academy of Pediatrics, United Methodist Church, Orthodox Union and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops agree that unnecessarily separating children from their parents further exacerbates the situation. We join these countless organizations and leaders on both sides of the aisle from across this country in denouncing these actions, including former First Lady Laura Bush who powerfully stated "this zero-tolerance policy is cruel. It is immoral."

We urge you to rescind this unethical and merciless policy; it is beneath this country and its values.

Sincerely,

Michaelle Solages, D-Nassau Crystal Peoples-Stokes, D-Buffalo Patricia Fahy, D-Albany Yuh-line Niou, D-Manhattan Nily Rozic D-Queens Peter Abbate, D-Brooklyn Thomas Abinanti, D-Westchester Carmen Arroyo, D-Bronx Jeffrion Aubry, D-Queens Brian Barnwell, D-Queens Didi Barrett, D-Dutchess Nick Perry, D-Brooklyn
Marcos Crespo, D-Bronx
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Billy Jones, D-Chateaugay
Latoya Joyner, D-Bronx
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Charles Barron, D-Brooklyn Michael Benedetto, D-Bronx Rodneyse Bichotte, D-Brooklyn Edward Braunstein, D-Queens Anthony Brindisi, D-Utica Harry Bronson, D-Rochester David Buchwald, D-Westchester Kevin Cahill. D-Ulster Robert Carroll, D-Brooklyn Vivian Cook D-Queens William Colton D-Brooklyn Michael Cusick, D-Staten Island Steven Cymbrowitz, D-Brooklyn Maritza Davila, D-Brooklyn Carmen de la Rosa, D-Manhattan Michael DenDekker, D-Queens Inez Dickens, D-Manhattan Erik Dilan, D-Brooklyn Jeffrey Dinowitz, D-Bronx Anthony D'Urso, D-Nassau Steven Englebright, D-Nassau Harvey Epstein, D-Manhattan Aridia Espinal, D-Queens Natalia Fernandez, D-Bronx Sandra Galef, D-Westchester Deborah Glick, D-Manhattan Richard Gottfried, D-Manhattan Andrew Hevesi, D-Queens Dov Hikind, D-Brooklyn Earlene Hooper, D-Nassau Pamela Hunter, D-Syracuse Alicia Hyndman, D-Queens Ellen Jaffee, D-Rockland Kimberly Jean-Pierre, D-Suffolk Donna Lupardo, D-Binghamton William Magee, D-Nelson William Magnarelli, D-Syracuse

John McDonald, D-Albany Michael Miller, D-Queens Joseph Morelle, D-Irondequoit Walter Mosley, D-Brooklyn Catherine Nolan, D-Queens Daniel O'Donnell, D-Manhattan Felix Ortiz, D-Brooklyn Amy Paulin, D-Brooklyn Christine Pellegrino, D-Suffolk Stacey Pheffer Amato, D-Queens Victor Pichardo, D-Bronx Gary Pretlow, D-Westchester Dan Quart, D-Manhattan Phil Ramos, D-Suffolk Jose Rivera, D-Bronx Diana Richardson, D-Brooklyn Robert Rodriguez, D-Manhattan Daniel Rosenthal, D-Queens Linda Rosenthal, D-Manhattan Sean Ryan, D-Buffalo Rebecca Seawright, D-Manhattan Aravella Simotas, D-Queens James Skoufis, D-Orange Steven Stern, D-Nassau Al Stirpe, D-Syracuse Al Taylor, D-Manhattan Fred Thiele, D-Suffolk Matthew Titone, D-Staten Island Michele Titus, D-Queens Clyde Vanel, D-Queens Latrice Walker, D-Bronx Helene Weinstein, D-Brooklyn David Weprin, D-Queens Jaime Williams, D-Brooklyn Tremaine Wright, D-Brooklyn Kenneth Zebrowski, D-Rockland