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July 30, 2018

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

**House Members Must Convene Oversight Hearings  
Regarding Family Separation and Detention**

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the undersigned civil and human rights organizations, we write to express our profound concern regarding the Trump administration's unacceptably slow response to its self-created crisis of family separations at our Southern border. The administration has now missed all of its court-ordered deadlines for reuniting children with their parents, and we urge you to convene oversight hearings to demand answers about this cruel and ineffective policy. It is inappropriate for 435 House members to return to their districts and to their families for the August recess while more than 700 young children are still being kept from their parents.

As you know, in April, the Trump administration announced it would criminally prosecute all undocumented immigrants who were detained at the U.S.-Mexico border, even those seeking asylum, with no exceptions made for those who were traveling with their children. This resulted in parents being sent to jails, and in their children being taken away and placed in the custody of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). In less than two months, more than 2,500 children were needlessly taken away from their parents.

While the bipartisan outcry against this cruel practice eventually pressured the administration to reconsider its approach, the damage to the affected children has been incalculable, and the administration's response has been nothing short of incompetent. Last month, a federal district judge ordered the administration to reunite all children under the age of five with their parents within a two-week period. Only a fraction of children in that age group were reunited by the deadline, and weeks later, dozens remain separated. The same court also ordered the administration to reunite all children between 5 and 17 years of age within one month – and yesterday we learned that the government again has fallen far short. To complicate matters further, the administration acknowledged that it has deported as many as 468 parents without their children, making it likely that this crisis will continue for a significant period of time.

This summer, we saw the administration and its allies try to use this manufactured crisis as leverage to force votes on a slew of unrelated immigration law reforms. We now urge you to use your oversight and appropriations authority as leverage to ensure the administration fixes the catastrophe it created – including by providing far more clarity on its plans for reunifying families, explaining how it will address the trauma that children have suffered under this policy, and clearly spelling out plans for how it will instead use humane, lawful, and cost-efficient alternatives to detention in the future.

For example, the administration still needs to explain:

1. Why it is unilaterally making “eligibility” determinations that narrow the numbers of families that “qualify” for reunification;
2. What its plan and timeline is for finding deported parents and reunifying them with their children in the United States;
3. Why it is pushing to deport families as quickly as possible after reunification;
4. Why it continues to needlessly jail thousands of children, separated parents, and immigrants in inhumane ICE detention facilities when they are eligible for release; and
5. How it responds to reports that it has destroyed records related to family separations.

Again, this is not the time for Congress to return to their families while so many children are waiting to return to theirs. The Senate intends to hold a hearing this week, but we need both chambers of Congress to do everything in their power to help resolve this crisis. Members of Congress should also use this upcoming month to visit detention facilities nationwide as well as at the border, and with jailed immigrants to better understand the chaos and cruelty that this administration has wrought.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Action Together Network  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Humanist Association  
Andrew Goodman Foundation  
Anti-Defamation League  
Arab American Institute (AAI)  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance  
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Center for Community Self-Help  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Center for Popular Democracy  
Children’s Defense Fund

Coalition on Human Needs  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men (Catholic)  
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)  
DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Defending Rights & Dissent  
Democrats for Education Reform  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Equal Justice Society  
Equality California  
Farmworker Justice  
FORGE, Inc.  
Freedom Network USA  
Futures Without Violence  
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.  
Hispanic Federation  
Human Rights Campaign  
Immigration Hub  
Impact Fund  
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Justice in Motion  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Mi Familia Vota  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
NAACP  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.  
National Action Network  
National Association of Human Rights Workers  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Employment Law Project  
National Immigrant Justice Center  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Indian Education Association  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund

National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women's Law Center  
Oxfam America  
Partnership for America's Children  
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law  
SEIU  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Sikh American Legal Defense and education Fund  
The Sikh Coalition  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Institute Justice Team  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Teach Plus  
Truman National Security Project  
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants  
UnidosUS (formerly National Council of La Raza)  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Church of Christ  
YWCA USA