

Tuesday, July 29, 2014

Re: Supplemental Funding for Refugee Situation at Southern Border

Dear Senator,

We, the undersigned 191 faith-based, civil and human rights, immigration, anti-violence, labor, public health, education, and legal services organizations, urge you to respond to the refugee situation at the southern border by bringing a clean supplemental funding bill, containing no proposals to curtail protections for unaccompanied children from the Northern Triangle of Central America, up for a vote.

Supplemental funding is critical to ensure that the U.S. government is resourced to respond effectively to the refugee situation at the border. Without adequate funding, our federal government will not be able to screen, care for, and provide protection to vulnerable children and families seeking safety.

We oppose any attempt to add provisions to a supplemental funding bill that would roll back the fundamental protections for children in the bipartisan Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPRA), particularly the HUMANE Act sponsored by Senator Cornyn and Representative Cuellar. The HUMANE Act would rapidly deport children who may be victims of trafficking, sexual assault, violence, or other persecution without giving them a meaningful opportunity to seek legal protection.

Most of the refugees at the southern border come from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala – three countries contending with severe violence, impunity, and complicity and corruption within their governments. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has found that almost 60 percent of children fleeing to the United States from these countries may have a valid claim to asylum or other legal protection. The United States is not the only country to which these children are escaping – according to UNHCR, since 2008 the number of asylum applications from the affected countries filed in Mexico, Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Belize has increased by 712 percent.

A confidential UNHCR report, dated June 2014, concluded that in practice the cursory screening process currently in place for unaccompanied Mexican children apprehended in the United States is entirely inadequate to identify children with genuine protection needs. We are extremely concerned that the HUMANE Act and similar proposals to amend the TVPRA seek to extend that screening process, or elements of that process, to unaccompanied children from other countries. Rather than limiting access to the asylum system for children fleeing violence from Central America, Congress should robustly fund the existing adjudication system to ensure that every child has the opportunity to appear before an immigration judge, with counsel, to receive fair and full consideration of his or her legal claims.

In the face of this complex humanitarian challenge, our nation must not compromise on fundamental principles of compassion, fairness, and due process, nor on our international refugee protection obligations. Amending the TVPRA to limit access to the U.S. asylum and humanitarian protection systems would send vulnerable children back to threats of violence, sexual assault, and possible death. We cannot endanger these children or risk our legacy as a nation committed to human rights.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

AFL-CIO

Alliance for a Just Society

American Civil Liberties Union

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

American Friends Service Committee

American Humanist Association

American Immigration Lawyers Association

American Jewish Committee

American Public Health Association

America's Voice Education Fund

Amnesty International

Appleseed

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles

Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC

Asian and Pacific Island Institute on Domestic Violence

ASISTA Immigration Assistance

Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities

Center for Community Change

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Child Labor Coalition

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Disciples Women

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries

Church World Service

Disciples Women

DREAM Action Coalition

Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.

Farmworker Justice

First Focus Campaign for Children

Franciscan Action Network

Free the Slaves

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

Futures Without Violence

HIAS

Human Rights First

Immigrant Legal Resource Center

International Rescue Committee
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
League of United Latin American Citizens
Legal Momentum
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
MomsRising
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Consumers League
National Education Association
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Justice for Our Neighbors
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Partnership for New Americans
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice
Polaris
Safe Passage Project
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Solomon Project
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southern Poverty Law Center
Tacoma Community House
Tahirih Justice Center
The Bortel Firm, LLC
The Episcopal Church
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
Union for Reform Judaism
United Auto Workers International
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
United We Dream
Vital Voices Global Partnership

We Belong Together, Women for Common Sense Immigration Reform
Women of Color Network
Women's Refugee Commission
Working Partnerships USA
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights
YWCA USA

State and Local Organizations

Advocates for Basic Legal Equality (ABLE)
Alaska Institute for Justice
American Gateways
Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
CASA de Maryland
CASA de Virginia
Causa Oregon
Center for Employment Training Immigration and Citizenship Program
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Georgia Region
Coalition for Human Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST)
Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CCASA)
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
Day One, the RI Coalition Against Sexual Assault
DC Rape Crisis Center
Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Detroit City Council Member Castaneda-Lopez
Detroit/Michigan National Lawyers Guild
Educators For Fair Consideration (E4FC)
El Centro Hispano de Oceana
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
Florida Council Against Sexual Violence
Florida Council of Churches
Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials (GALEO)
Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Grossman Law, LLC
Grupo de Apoyo e Integración Hispanoamericano
Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault & Family Violence
Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
Helen Tarokic Law PLLC
HIAS Pennsylvania
Human Agenda
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas
Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project

Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County, Colorado
Immigrants' List Civic Action, Inc
Immigration Center for Women and Children
Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Jane Doe Inc., the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic
Violence
Justice for Our Neighbors-NebraskaJustice for Our Neighbors - West Michigan
Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence
Korean American Resource and Cultural Center
Korean Resource Center
La Raza Centro Legal
Macomb International Service Center (MISC)
Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Michigan Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network
Michigan United
Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Nationalities Service Center
NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence
New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Legal Assistance Group
New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence
OneAmerica
Opening Doors, Inc.
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
PCUN, Oregon's Farmworkers Union
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition
People Acting in Community Together
Perretta Law Office
Promise Arizona
Redwood Justice Fund
Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES)
Refugio del Rio Grande, Inc.
RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Sacred Heart Community Service

Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN)
Seton Hall University School of Law Center for Social Justice
South Dakota Coalition Ending Domestic and Sexual Violence
Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition
Texas Appleseed
Thai Community Development Center
The Community Law Office
The Voices and Faces Project
Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance
Volunteers of Legal Service
Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs
Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Wyoming Coalition Against DVSA
Public Counsel