

August 10, 2017

Elaine Duke  
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Duke:

The undersigned 377 national, state, and local organizations write today to urge you to direct Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to cease its “surge initiative” that targets for detention, deportation, and potential criminal prosecution vulnerable children and their sponsors seeking protection at our borders. Our organizations have longstanding experience and expertise in advocating on behalf of immigrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees—including unaccompanied children—and we are deeply concerned over the impact that these enforcement actions will have on the well-being of families and communities across the United States and the ability of children to safely and humanely access protection.

While the stated purpose of this new initiative is to disrupt human smuggling networks, we are alarmed by its tactics and fear that these actions will have the opposite effect. Children and others fleeing violence and harm will find themselves trapped between a life-threatening situation in their home country and a precarious route to safety. Whether families are involved in children’s decisions to flee or a child decides on his or her own, the decision to flee is not one that is made lightly, but rather because the security and protection systems in their own countries have failed to protect children from harm. Rather than disrupting smuggling operations, we fear these new enforcement tactics will embolden criminal actors, who will subject children whose only choice is to flee to even more costly, dangerous, and hidden routes. Ultimately, an initiative targeting smugglers and smuggling networks should do just that—not prosecute and punish parents for trying to save their children’s lives.

This initiative—like other actions recently reported targeting families and youth—will further devastate communities across the United States, where fear of immigration enforcement has already reduced engagement with local police and the reporting of crimes, including domestic violence and sexual assault. Many of the families being targeted in the surge initiative also have U.S. citizen children in their household who are at risk of being left without a parent to care for them. These children may become dependent on child welfare or other social service agencies, creating an unnecessary and costly burden on localities and states. Tearing apart families will be deeply traumatizing for all family members involved and have lasting effects on them and their communities. To separate—perhaps forever—children from their parents flies in the face of our values and does nothing to increase our national security or public safety.

This new initiative will also result in costly and inhumane detention, both of parents who are being sent to immigration detention to await a hearing or removal, and of unaccompanied children who may remain in custody for prolonged periods of time with no prospect of family reunification. These prolonged detentions will not only have an emotional toll on children, they will have procedural and financial costs as well. Children who cannot be reunified with parents will navigate their legal protection case from Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) custody, instead of from the community, where their sponsors assume all costs for their care. Detention also results in reduced access to legal counsel and, often for children, a more drawn out court proceeding that a child is not equipped to navigate.

Lastly, this enforcement initiative contravenes our most foundational child welfare principles. Family unity is a fundamental right in all fifty states. Child welfare practice is predicated on the assumption that it is in the best interest of children to be with their families and out of institutionalized care.

Threatening, detaining, and deporting parents and other sponsors will have a chilling effect on families and will leave highly traumatized children without the familial care and support they need during a time when they are in the midst of legal proceedings on which their safety, and even their lives, can depend. Further, as previously stated, your agency's actions carry collateral consequences for U.S. citizen children. This enforcement initiative is an inappropriate use of programs and services intended to protect children, and threatens the very integrity of our child protection principles and system.

Your predecessor well knew the extent of the insecurity and instability many of these children and their relatives have fled in the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) along with numerous other organizations have repeatedly documented the refugee crisis caused by conditions in the region and have called for the United States and regional partners to respond with protection, not misguided attempts at deterrence. The Central American Minors (CAM) program offers children a legal path to protection in the United States while still in their home countries so that they may avoid perilous journeys to safety. We urge you to prioritize and expand this critical tool, which promises to better protect children from those who might do them harm than traumatic and ineffective enforcement tactics.

The agency's recent enforcement actions against immigrant families and youth without criminal history as part of efforts to combat gang violence similarly undermine the stability and safety of our communities. We call on you to end these enforcement actions—and the larger “surge initiative”—immediately, and welcome the opportunity for further discussion on how to best disrupt criminal networks while ensuring that children and families have access to safety and a fair and just legal process.

Sincerely,

**National Organizations**

Adjunct Justice  
African American Ministers In Action (AAMIA)  
Alianza Americas  
America's Voice Education Fund  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)  
American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)  
American Psychological Association  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee  
Americans for Immigrant Justice  
Anti-Defamation League  
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)  
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)  
Campaign for Youth Justice

Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities  
Catholic Committee of the South  
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.  
Center for American Progress  
Center for Employment Training  
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries- Disciples of Christ  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries  
Coalition for Juvenile Justice  
Coalition on Human Needs  
CODEPINK  
Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)  
Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC)  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces  
Desert Southwest Conference UMC  
Disciples Home Missions  
Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel  
Disciples Women  
Enlace  
Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement  
Family Network on Disabilities  
Farmworker Justice  
First Focus  
Food Empowerment Project  
Freedom Network USA  
Fuerza Mundial  
Futures Without Violence  
Global Community in Action  
Grassroots Leadership  
HIAS  
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA - JPIC  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
Indivisible  
Interfaith Worker Justice  
International Rescue Committee  
InterReligious Task Force On Central America and Colombia  
Justice Strategies  
Kids in Need of Defense  
Lambda Legal  
Laotian American National Conference  
Latin America and Caribbean Office-Global Ministries  
Latin America Working Group Education Fund  
Latino Victory Project  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office  
Mi Familia Vota  
NAACP  
NAKASEC (National Korean American Service & Education Consortium)  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Immigrant Justice Center  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Latina/o Psychological Association  
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Nicaragua Center for Community Action  
North Bay Jobs with Justice  
Our Revolution  
Oxfam  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Pro Bono Net  
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator (Viatorians)  
Redwood Justice Fund  
Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES)  
School Social Work Association of America  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Sisters of Charity, BVM  
Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, New Windsor, NY  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
Tahirih Justice Center  
Teaching for Change  
The Hampton Institute : A working class think tank  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society  
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants  
UnidosUS (formerly NCLR)  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
University Leadership Initiative  
WOLA  
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights  
Women's Refugee Commission

### **State and Local Organizations**

"Madre Tierra" Latino Women organization

AB 540 Ally Training Project  
ACLAMO Family Centers  
ACTIONN  
Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc.  
Advocates for Children and Youth  
African Services Committee  
AFSC Colorado  
AFSC Iowa  
Ajo Samaritans  
Alianza  
Allies of Knoxville's Immigrant Neighbors (AKIN)  
American Friends Service Committee- Arizona  
Apostle Immigrant Services  
Arkansas Justice Collective  
Arkansas United Community Coalition  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-LA  
Asian Americans United  
Asian Law Alliance  
Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach  
Association for Special Children & Families  
Asylee Women Enterprise  
Asylum Seekers Housing Network (ASHN)  
Atlas: DIY  
Ayuda  
Bethany Immigration Services  
Border Action Network  
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council  
Brockport Ecumenical Outreach Committee  
Cabrin Immigrant Services of NYC  
Campaign for Hoosier Families  
Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition  
CASA  
Casa Latina  
Catholic Agency for Migration & Refugee Services  
Catholic Charities of Jackson, Mississippi - Migrant Support Center  
Catholic Charities of Springdale  
Catholic Charities of the East Bay  
Catholic Charities of Trenton  
Catholic Charities of West Tennessee  
Catholic Charities Tompkins/Tioga  
Causa Oregon  
Central American Resource Center  
Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative (CVIIC)  
Centro Del Inmigrante, Inc.  
Centro Laboral de Graton  
Centro Legal de la Raza  
Centro Romero

Change Agency  
Chicago Law and Education Foundation  
Chicano Federation of San Diego County  
Children's Law Center of Massachusetts  
Church of Our Saviour/La Iglesia de Nuestro Salvador, Episcopal  
Church Women United in New York State  
Cleveland Jobs with Justice  
CLUE Ventura County  
Coalicion de Derechos Humanos  
Coalicion de Lidetes Latinos, CLILA  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)  
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition  
Comite Civico del Valle  
Communities in Schools of Los Angeles  
Community Action Committee of Cape Cod & Islands  
Community of Friends in Action, Inc.  
Congress of Day Laborers  
Connecticut Legal Services, Inc.  
Connecticut Students for a Dream  
Courage Campaign  
CRLA Foundation  
Crossing Borders - Dubuque  
CT Working Families  
CWS-Lancaster (PA)  
Danbury Justice Network  
DC Latino Caucus  
DC-Maryland Justice for Our Neighbors  
Detained Migrant Solidarity Committee  
Dolores Street Community Services  
Dominican Sisters in Committed Collaboration (Amityville, Blauvelt, Caldwell, Hope Sparkill)  
Dream Team Los Angeles - DTLA  
East Bay Sanctuary Covenant  
Eastern Iowa Community Bond Project  
El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos  
El Monte Wesleyan Christian Church  
El Rescate  
Encuentro  
End Domestic Abuse WI  
English Ministry of the Korean Presbyterian Church of St. Louis  
Equal Justice Center  
Equality California  
Erie Neighborhood House  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Advocacy Office  
Evanston Interfaith Refugee Roundtable  
Evanston Scholars  
Fe y Justicia Worker Center  
First Friends of NJ AND NY  
Florida Immigrant Coalition

Franciscan Peace Center  
Friends of Broward Detainees  
Friends of Miami-Dade Detainees  
Fuerza Latina  
Future Arizona Justice for our Neighbors  
Greater New York Labor Religion Coalition  
Greater Rochester Coalition for Immigration Justice  
Ground Game LA  
Grupo de Apoyo e Integración Hispanoamericano  
Guatemala Acupuncture and Medical Aid Project  
Hana Center  
Her Justice  
Holy Cross Ministerio Hispano  
Hudson Civic Action  
Human Agenda  
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas  
Iglesia Alas de Salvacion  
Iglesia Nueva Creación  
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Immanuel Fellowship: a MultiCultural Congregation  
Immigrant Connection at National Wesleyan Church  
Immigrant Defenders Law Center  
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota  
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County  
Immigrant Youth Coalition  
Immigration Center for Women and Children  
Immigration Center of San Bernardino, Inc.  
Immigration Counseling Service (ICS)  
Immigration Issues Committee of Herndon-Reston Indivisible  
Immigration Project, Inc.  
Immigration Unlimited, Inc.  
Indivisible 4 Immigration  
Indivisible Alta-Pasadena  
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice  
Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective (IEIYC)  
Interfaith Alliance for Immigrant Justice  
Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants  
Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice - IMIrJ  
International Institute of Buffalo  
International Institute of the Bay Area  
Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Irish International Immigrant Center  
Jewish Family Service of San Diego  
Just Neighbors Ministry  
Justice for All  
Justice for our Neighbors Houston  
Justice For Our Neighbors Southeastern Michigan

Justice For Our Neighbors West Michigan  
Kentucky Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Kids for College  
Kino Border Initiative  
Korean Presbyterian Church of St Louis English Ministry  
Korean Resource Center  
La Casa de Amistad  
La Raza Centro Legal  
La Union Hace La Fuerza  
Lacey and Larkin Frontera Fund  
Lafayette Urban Ministry  
Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County  
Legal Services for Children  
Lemkin House  
Long Island Wins  
Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice  
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania  
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-NM  
Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry New Jersey  
Lutheran Social Services of New York  
Macomb Immigrant Service Center  
Make the Road NY  
March and Rally LA  
Masa  
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition  
Michigan Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence  
Michigan Immigrant Rights Center  
Migrant and Immigrant Community Action Project  
Migrant Rights Collective  
Mission Graduates  
Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project  
Montgomery County Education Forum  
Morristown Unitarian Universalist Fellowship  
Mujeres Inmigrantes Luchando Unidas (MILU)  
Mujeres Unidas y Activas  
National Lawyers Guild - Los Angeles Chapter  
NC Child  
New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice  
New Mexico Voices for Children  
New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice  
New York Justice For Our Neighbors  
NH Conference UCC Immigration Working Group  
NM Immigrant Law Center  
North Carolina Council of Churches  
North Carolina Justice Center  
North County Immigration Task Force  
Northeast Justice Center

Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors  
Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights  
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project  
Oakland Law Collaborative  
Occupy Bergen County (New Jersey)  
OneAmerica  
OutFront Minnesota  
Pangea Legal Services  
Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership (PEAL) Center  
PASO - West Suburban Action Project  
Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition  
Pittsburgh LCLAA  
Portland Central America Solidarity Committee  
Project for Law Enforcement Accountability for Justice  
Project IRENE  
Promesa Boyle Heights  
Promise Arizona  
Proyecto Santo Nino de Atocha  
Public Counsel  
Public Law Center  
Reformed Church of Highland Park  
Refugio del Rio Grande  
Rhode Island Parent Information Network  
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network  
Rural and Migrant Ministry  
Safe Passage  
San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program, Inc.  
Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, Inc.  
Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of New York  
Sisters of St. Francis  
Sisters of St. Francis, St. Francis Province  
Skagit Immigrant Rights Council  
Social Justice Collaborative  
South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship and Training (SAFEST)  
Southeast Immigrant Rights Network  
Southwest Detroit Immigrant and Refugee Center  
St John of God  
St Joseph Valley Project Jobs with Justice  
St. Mark's Presbyterian Church  
St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church Social Action Committee  
St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of NJ (SPAN)  
SWOP - Southwest Organizing Project  
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition  
Texans Care for Children  
The Church of the Village, NYC  
The Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc.  
The Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project

The Good Shepherd United Church of Christ  
The Green Valley/Sahuarita Samaritans  
Trinity Episcopal Church  
U-Lead Athens  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of NJ  
Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network (UUPLAN)  
University of San Francisco Immigration and Deportation Defense Clinic  
University of Tulsa Legal Clinic  
UnLocal, Inc.  
UpValley Family Centers of Napa County  
Urban Justice Center  
UUPLAN Immigration Justice  
Voices for Children in Nebraska  
Voices for Children of San Antonio  
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs  
Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights  
Wayne Action for Racial Equality  
WeCount!  
Welcoming Gainesville and Alachua County  
Wilco Justice Alliance (Williamson County, TX)  
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center, Inc.  
Women Against War  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Portland Branch  
Workers Defense Project  
Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault  
YWCA Kalamazoo