

June 22, 2010

RE: Support for the Humane Enforcement and Legal Protections (HELP) for Separated Children Act

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to support the HELP Separated Children Act, sponsored by Senator Al Franken (D-MN). This bill would implement critically needed reforms to protect children impacted by immigration enforcement.

Enforcement activities conducted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) and local law enforcement agencies operating under agreement with ICE too often result in unnecessary harm to children, families and communities. In recent years, ICE has arrested and detained hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom have U.S. citizen children. Parents who are detained are separated from their children, sometimes permanently, and always at great cost to the well-being of the family and the community.

At a time when immigration enforcement continues to expand, the HELP Separated Children Act would provide critical, nationwide protocols to prevent children from unnecessary placement in foster care while their parent’s or caregiver’s case is pending. It would do so by ensuring that parents and caregivers apprehended during immigration enforcement are identified and treated with special concern for the best interest of their minor children.

Currently, when ICE or its surrogates apprehend a parent or caregiver, there is no requirement that they be given the opportunity to make childcare arrangements. If they are detained, there is no requirement that parents or caregivers be informed of the location of their children or be permitted to communicate with child welfare agencies and comply with reunification plans. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that detained parents will have sufficient time and access prior to removal to obtain travel documents for their children. As a result, many parents and caregivers who are deported are unable to arrange to have their children join them in their home country. Unnecessary separations of children from their parents threaten the child’s safety, security, well-being and longer-term development and should be avoided whenever possible.

The HELP Separated Children Act establishes guidelines for immigration enforcement actions that will ensure that these actions do not unnecessarily harm children and families. Specifically, the legislation would require that state child welfare agencies and NGOs be granted access to all individuals who have an ICE detainer lodged against them or who are in the physical custody of the Department of Homeland Security to assist in determining whether the individual is a parent, legal guardian, or primary caregiver of a child in the United States. It would also require that anyone believed to be a parent or guardian be granted phone calls to make care arrangements for their children.

The HELP Separated Children Act would also require that apprehended parents, legal guardians, and primary caregivers who cannot be released remain in the area in which they were apprehended until care arrangements have been made for their child. Furthermore, it would promote family reunification at the time a parent's or caregiver's immigration case concludes by ensuring that detained parents can communicate with their children, the child welfare system, and family courts. This legislation would reduce unnecessary strain on children and save taxpayers millions of dollars by reducing the likelihood that children will be placed unnecessarily into the foster care system.

We urge you to support this legislation to restore our nation's commitment to child welfare and family values. The federal government's current apprehension methods and detention and removal policies have resulted in traumatized children and broken families. The HELP Separated Children Act will ensure that as we enforce our laws, we protect the sanctity of the family in American society.

Sincerely,

**National Organizations:**

AFL-CIO  
America's Promise Alliance  
American Humane Association  
American Immigration Lawyers Association  
American Muslim Voice  
American Nursery & Landscape Association  
Amnesty International USA  
Arizona Council of Human Service Providers  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Asian American Justice Center  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance  
Bridging Group  
Catholic Charities USA  
Center for Asian Pacific Islander  
Center for Farmworker Families  
Child Welfare League of America  
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program  
The Episcopal Church  
Every Child Matters Education Fund  
Family Violence Prevention Fund  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Foster Care Alumni of America  
Foster Family-based Treatment Association  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

Human Rights Watch  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
Immigration Equality  
Juvenile Law Center  
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)  
Latino Commission on AIDS  
Legal Momentum  
Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service (LIRS)  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. – Washington Office  
Midwest Coalition for Human Rights  
Moms Rising  
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Consumers League  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of La Raza  
National Federation of Filipino American Associations  
National Foster Care Coalition  
National Immigrant Justice Center  
National Immigration Forum  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium  
National Latino AIDS Action Network  
National Policy Partnership  
OCA  
Physicians for Human Rights  
Saavedra Law Firm  
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, South Central Community  
Sojourners  
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center  
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
Voices for America's Children  
Women's Refugee Commission  
Youth Build USA

Zero to Three

**State and Local Organizations:**

**Arizona**

Arizona Council of Human Service Providers  
Children's Action Alliance  
Florence Project  
Global Family Legal Services  
MEChA Arizona Student Union  
Tumbleweed, Center for Youth Development

**Arkansas**

Arkansas Voices

**California**

Asian Law Alliance  
California Immigrant Policy Center  
Children Now  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles  
East Bay Community Law Center  
International Institute of the Bay Area  
Public Counsel

**Colorado**

Lutheran Advocacy Ministries  
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network

**Connecticut**

Connecticut Voices for Children

**District of Columbia**

Ayuda  
The Episcopal Church

**Florida**

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center  
Florida Legal Services, Inc.  
Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc.  
Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association, Inc.  
Legal Ministry H.E.L.P., Inc.

**Georgia**

Asian American Legal Advocacy Center, Inc. (AALAC) of Georgia  
Georgia Rural Urban Summit  
Latinos for Education & Justice Organization

**Illinois**

Instituto del Progreso Latino  
Maria Baldini-Potermin & Associates

**Iowa**

Child and Family Policy Center  
Lutheran Services in Iowa  
National Association of Social Workers, Iowa Chapter

**Kentucky**

Kentucky Youth Advocates

**Louisiana**

New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice

**Maine**

Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
Maine Children's Alliance

**Maryland**

CASA de Maryland  
Lutheran Office on Public Policy

**Michigan**

Bethany Children's Services  
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
Michigan's Children

**Minnesota**

Advocates for Human Rights  
American Immigration Lawyers Association, Minnesota/Dakotas Chapter  
Ascension Church  
Benedictine-Franciscan Immigrant Justice Commission (St. Joseph & Little Falls, MN)  
Casa Guadalupana  
Catholic Charities of St. Paul & Minneapolis  
Center for Asian Pacific Islanders  
Center for Mission, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis  
Children's Defense Fund Minnesota  
Children's Law Center of Minnesota  
Chinese Social Service Center  
Church World Service  
Congregational Council, the Miracle Lutheran Church  
Department of Social Concerns, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud

Family & Children's Service  
Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls  
Great River Interfaith Partnership  
Hmong American Partnership  
Hospitality Minnesota  
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota  
Immigration Task Force, Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ  
Interfaith Coalition on Immigration  
ISALAH  
Jewish Community Action  
Justice Commission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates  
Latin America & Haiti Focus Group, St. Luke's Presbyterian Church  
Legal Rights Center  
Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy in Minnesota  
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota  
Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers  
Mid-Minnesota Legal Assistance  
Midwest Food Processors Association  
Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights  
Minnesota AFL-CIO  
Minnesota Agri-Growth Council  
Minnesota Alliance With Youth  
Minnesota Business Immigration Coalition  
Minnesota Catholic Conference  
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce  
Minnesota Fathers & Families Network  
Minnesota Hispanic Bar Association  
Minnesota Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
Minnesota Lodging Association  
Minnesota Milk Producers Association  
Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association  
Minnesota Restaurant Association  
Minnesota School Social Workers Association  
Minnesota Strengthening Our Lives (SOL)  
No More Children Left Behind  
Office of Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation, School Sisters of Notre Dame,  
Mankato  
Project for Pride in Living  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 26 – Minneapolis  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Minnesota State Council  
Sisters Online

Social Concerns & Family Office, Diocese of New Ulm  
Sowers Leadership Team, Guardian Angels Catholic Church  
St. John Neumann Catholic Church  
The Minneapolis Foundation  
UFCW Local 1161 – Worthington  
UFCW Local 789 – South St. Paul  
UNITE Here, Minnesota State Council  
United Cambodian Association of Minnesota  
United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), Local 1161 – Worthington  
United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), Local 789 – South St. Paul  
Willmar Area Comprehensive Immigration Reform

***Minnesota Faith Leaders, Elected Officials & Community Advocates***

Rabbi Morris J. Allen, Beth Jacob Congregation  
Rabbi Renee Bauer, Mayim Rabim Congregation  
Rev. Ralph Baumgartner, Galilee Lutheran Church, Roseville, MN  
Rev. Chris Becker, Peace Lutheran Church, Inver Grove Heights, MN  
Pastor Chris Berthelsen, First Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN  
Rev. Mariann Budde, St. John's Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, MN  
Pastor Sarah Campbell, Mayflower Community Congregational Church, Minneapolis, MN  
Mayor Chris Coleman, City of St. Paul  
Rev. Doug Donley, University Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN  
Rabbi Amy Eilberg, Jay Phillips Center for Jewish-Christian Learning  
Pastor Paul Erickson, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, St. Paul, MN  
Rev. James Erlandson, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, St. Paul, MN  
Rev. G. Allen Foster, Citadel of Hope Church, Brooklyn Park, MN  
Pastor Pam Fickenscher, Edina Community Lutheran Church, Edina, MN  
Luz María Frías, Human Rights & Equal Economic Opportunity Dept., City of St. Paul  
Pastor Dan Garnaas, Grace University Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, MN  
Rev. Chad Gilbertson, Willmar, MN  
Revs. Patrick & Luisa Cabello Hansel, Minneapolis Area Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Minneapolis, MN  
Rev. Richard Headen, Presbyterian Church USA, Plymouth, MN  
Allan D. Henden, Lay Leader, United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, MN  
Rev. Karen Hering, Unity Unitarian Church, St. Paul, MN  
Rev. Anita C. Hill, St. Paul, MN  
Loan T. Huynh, Attorney at Law  
Bishop Craig E. Johnson, Minneapolis Area Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Minneapolis, MN  
Elder Karen Larson, St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Minnetonka, MN  
Rabbi Michael Latz, Shir Tikvah Congregation  
Charles & Hertha Lutz, Peace and Justice Advocates, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Minneapolis, MN  
Miguel Lucas Lindgren, DFL Latino Caucus Treasurer, Roseville, MN

Brianna MacPhee, Executive Board, Minnesota Latino Caucus, Minneapolis, MN  
Pastor Rod Maeker, Faculty (ret.), Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN  
Rev. Naomi Mahler, Paz y Esperanza Lutheran Church, Willmar, MN  
Pastor Susan Maetzold Moss, Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota  
Sen. Mee Moua (Dist. 67), Chair, Minnesota Senate Judiciary Committee, St. Paul, MN  
Lauren Morse-Wendt, Mission and Ministry Developer, Edina, MN  
Pastor Richard Mork, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, St. Paul, MN  
Rev. Jen Nagel, Salem English Lutheran, Minneapolis, MN  
Rev. Karsten Nelson, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN  
Rev. Keith H. Olstad, St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN  
Rafael Ortega, Ramsey County Commissioner  
Pastor Paul Slack, New Creation Community Church, Brooklyn Park, MN  
Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers, Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ  
Roxanne Smith, Social Justice Dir., St. Joseph the Worker Church, Maple Grove, MN  
Chief Tom Smith, St. Paul Police Department  
Pastor Grant Stevensen, St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN  
Rabbi Adam Stock Spilke, Mount Zion Temple  
Pastor Eric Strand, Edina Community Church, Edina, MN  
Rev. Dale Stuepfert, Director of Chaplaincy (ret.), Hennepin County Medical Center,  
Minneapolis, MN  
Pastor Steve Sylvester, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Circle Pines, MN  
Linda Thompson, Lay Leader, St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Plymouth, MN  
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray (District 62)  
Rev. Jill Tollefson, La Mision San Jose Obrero de Episcopal, Montgomery, MN  
Rev. Susan Tjornehoj, Minneapolis Area Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in  
America, Minneapolis, MN  
Pastor Jason Van Hunnik, Westwood Lutheran Church, St. Louis Park, MN  
Pastor Mark Vinge, House of Hope Lutheran Church, New Hope, MN  
Rev. David Wangaard, Minneapolis Area Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in  
America, Minneapolis, MN  
Pastor Mark Wegener, Woodlake Lutheran Church, Richfield, MN  
Rev. Bruce M. Westphal, Westwood Lutheran Church, St. Louis Park, MN  
Rev. Jonathan Zielske, Hope Lutheran Church

### **New Jersey**

Association for Children of New Jersey  
Casa Esperanza  
IRATE & First Friends  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network

### **New Mexico**

For Families, LLC.  
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry  
New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Protective Services Division  
New Mexico Women's Justice Project  
PBJ Family Services, Inc.

**New York**

Coalition for Asian American Children and Families  
Make the Road New York  
The Osborne Association  
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

**North Carolina**

Action for Children North Carolina  
The Exceptional Children's Assistance Center

**Oklahoma**

Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy

**Oregon**

Immigration Counseling Services (Portland, OR)

**South Carolina**

South Carolina Appleseed

**Texas**

Catholic Charities of Dallas, Inc., Immigration & Legal Services  
Center for Public Policy Priorities  
Daya Inc.  
Wilco Justice Alliance

**Virginia**

Voices for Virginia's Children

**Washington**

Children's Home Society of Washington  
Northwest Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project