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**