

May 23, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker of the House
H-232, United States Capitol
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
H-204, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

We, the below signed organizations representing millions of women, write to express our horror and dismay regarding the Trump administration's inhumane treatment of immigrant women and children which undermines our nation's values, destroys families and communities, and hurts our economy and country. Since President Trump took office, this administration has embraced policies that endanger the lives and livelihoods of immigrant women, tear families apart, undermine fair pay, and leave children without the family members who love them. We call on Congress to engage in aggressive oversight and to enact legislation that affirms the dignity of immigrant women and children and protects our country.

Over the past 16 months, the Trump administration has targeted women and families seeking refuge in the United States as well as immigrants already living here. In particular, the administration:

- Purposefully took children away from their parents in what administration officials claimed is a "tough deterrent" for asylum seekers;
- Eliminated a presumption of release and other safeguards for pregnant women in detention despite documented health concerns;
- Prevented victims of domestic violence without legal status from accessing justice and protection;
- Stripped nearly 1 million people, more than half of whom are women, of DACA or Temporary Protected Status (TPS);

The Trump administration continues to destructively attack vulnerable families by making it as difficult as possible for women and children to legally seek asylum in the United States. White House Chief of Staff John Kelly said the United States would take children away from their parents as a "tough deterrent" for asylum seekers.¹ The *New York Times* reported nearly 700 children have been taken from adults claiming to be their parents since October of 2017.² Separating children from their parents is unspeakably cruel and inhumane. This is not what we aspire to be as a nation and it dishonors the values enshrined on the Statue of Liberty. These types of policies hurt all of us.

¹ The Hill: Kelly - It's not cruel to separate undocumented families.

<http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/387309-kelly-its-not-cruel-to-separate-undocumented-immigrant-families>

² New York Times: Hundreds of Immigrant Children Have Been Taken From Parents at U.S. Border

<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2018/04/20/us/immigrant-children-separation-ice.html?login=email&auth=login-email>

The Trump administration has also targeted pregnant women in immigration detention centers, reversing an Obama-era policy, allowing the agency to be able to hold pregnant women for longer periods of time in detention, often without adequate medical care, despite warnings from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP).³ The ACOG, AAP and AAFP affirmed, “the conditions in DHS facilities are not appropriate for pregnant women or children.” In addition, there have been multiple cases of detained pregnant women suffering from miscarriages and inadequate medical care.⁴

Furthermore, President Trump’s executive orders particularly harm women who’ve suffered from domestic violence and are afraid to report it out of fear of immigration enforcement.⁵ Within the first few months after these executive orders were issued, rape reports in Houston among the Latino community dropped 42.8 percent and reports of violent crime dropped 13 percent, with similar drops reported in Los Angeles.⁶ Last year, U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents stalked a courthouse to arrest a transgender woman who was attempting to obtain a restraining order from her abusive partner. The Department of Homeland Security later reaffirmed that its agents would continue to make courthouse arrests, even if they arrested victims of domestic violence.⁷ This not only exacerbates the chilling effect of survivors coming forward, but also undermines the mission of the courts and law enforcement.⁸ Attorney General Jeff Sessions has also signaled that the Justice Department may strip access to asylum protection from survivors of domestic violence.

Finally, nearly 1 million DACA recipients and TPS holders have been told they will lose their legal status and are in limbo after the Trump administration terminated the DACA program and TPS designations for Haiti, El Salvador, Nepal, Sudan, Nicaragua and Honduras. Women make up more than half of all DACA recipients and TPS holders are raising 273,000 U.S. citizen children.⁹ These are American families who are a part of our communities and know no other home.

³ American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and American Academy of Family Physicians, Letter to Acting ICE Director Homan.

<https://www.aafp.org/dam/AAFP/documents/advocacy/prevention/women/LT-DeputyDirectorHoman-033018.PDF>

⁴ Women’s Refugee Commission. Joint Complaint on ICE Detention and Treatment of Pregnant Women.

<https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/rights/resources/1524-joint-complaint-ice-detention-treatment-of-pregnant-women>

⁵ “Key Findings: 2017 Advocate and Legal Services Survey Regarding Immigrant Survivors” Available at:

<http://www.tahirih.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017-Advocate-and-Legal-Service-Survey-Key-Findings.pdf>

⁶ Houston Chronicle: HPD Chief Announces Decrease in Hispanics Reporting Rape and Violent Crimes Compared to Last Year.

<https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/HPD-chief-announces-decrease-in-Hispanics-11053829.php>; CBS Los Angeles: LAPD - Fear of Deportation Keeping Latinos from Reporting Sex Crimes.

<http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2017/03/22/lapd-fear-of-deportation-keeping-latinos-from-reporting-sex-crimes/>

⁷ El Paso Times: ICE Detains Alleged Domestic Violence Victim.

<https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/2017/02/15/ice-detains-domestic-violence-victim-court/97965624/>

⁸ Fifty-four percent of judges who responded to a recent survey reported court cases were interrupted due to an immigrant crime survivor’s fear of coming to court. # Eighty-two percent of prosecutors responding to the survey report that since President Trump took office, domestic violence is now underreported and harder to investigate and/or prosecute. American Civil Liberties Union. “Freezing Out Justice: How immigration arrests at courthouses are undermining the Justice System” Available at:

<https://www.aclu.org/report/freezing-out-justice> (quoting National Immigrant Women Advocacy Project. “Promoting Access to Justice for Immigrant and Limited English Proficient Crime Victims in an Age of Increased Immigration Enforcement: Initial Report from a 2017 National Survey” Available at:

<http://library.niwap.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrant-Access-to-Justice-National-Report.pdf>

⁹ Center for Migration Studies: A Statistical and Demographic Profile of U.S. Temporary Protected Status Populations from El Salvador, Honduras and Haiti. <http://cmsny.org/publications/jmhs-tps-elsalvador-honduras-haiti/>

In nearly every instance, women and children have borne the brunt of this administration's harsh rhetoric and cruel policies. From the very beginning, President Trump's administration put women at risk. In fact, one of the first reported people to suffer forced separation from her children because of the Trump administration's new policies was a mother - Guadalupe Garcia de Rayos - who was raising two U.S. citizen children in Arizona, following the rules, and making a routine ICE check-in when she was detained.¹⁰ Right now, there are too many women working hard, fueling our economy, and paying taxes, but vulnerable to losing a friend or family member who has been part of our community for years. Moreover, there are over 5 million U.S. citizen children with an undocumented parent who are also at risk of living in a single-parent home or in a state foster care system due to President Trump's immigration policies.¹¹

As organizations that represent women and families, we reject this President's treatment of immigrant women and children and call on Congress to enact policies that respect the sanctity of a family, create a common-sense and humane immigration process, and build a brighter future for the United States.¹²

Signed,

American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
Americans for Immigrant Justice
Arizona Coalition to End Sexual & Domestic Violence
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
ASISTA
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities
Central American Resource Center DC
Community Against Violence (CAV)
DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
End Domestic Abuse WI
Enlace Comunitario
Feminist Majority Foundation
Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Help End Abuse For Life, Inc.
Her Justice
Hispanic Federation
Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Kids in Need of Defense
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
MANA, A National Latina Organization

¹⁰ USA Today: Could this woman be the first deported because of Trump's orders?

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2017/02/08/deported-trump-guadalupe-garcia-de-rayo/97678236/>

¹¹ Randy Capps, Michael Fix, Jie Zong, A Profile of U.S. Children with Unauthorized Immigrant Parents, Migration Policy Institute, 2016, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/profile-us-childrenunauthorized-immigrant-parents>.

¹² <https://www.sfchronicle.com/nation/article/US-attorney-general-considers-ending-asylum-for-12905701.php>

Mi Familia Vota
Mississippi Coalition Against Domestic Violence
MomsRising
Montana Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
Mormon Women for Ethical Government
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC)
National Council of Jewish Women
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Latina/o Psychological Association
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Law Center
Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Ohio Domestic Violence Network
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Sanctuary for Families
Tahirih Justice Center
UltraViolet
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
Women's Law Project
Women's Refugee Commission
YWCA USA