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CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

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June 28, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20050

Dear President Trump,

As members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), we write to express our moral outrage over your decision to rip children away from their parents at the southern border and your disingenuous claim to fix this horrific policy of choice through your misleadingly titled "Affording Congress an Opportunity to Address Family Separation" executive order.

As African Americans, we are especially outraged knowing from our history the devastating impact of separating children from their parents, as was done during the horrific middle passage and enslavement of our ancestors. Our history teaches us the traumatic effect that family separation can have on children and their descendants for generations. This in effect continues to this day with the practice of mass incarceration driven by often reckless and aggressive overpolicing in black communities. These concerns have also been echoed by the American Psychological Association, which termed your policy of state-sponsored child abuse "needlessly cruel." Nor is it lost upon us that the targets of your continuous attacks are immigrants from minority communities, demonstrating yet again the racial effect, if not intent of your policies.

The Congressional Black Caucus first expressed concern over this issue in a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristjen Nielsen on March 20, 2018. In our letter, which we are attaching for your convenience, we asked for clarification about DHS policy on family separation, a list of meetings held on this topic, the reason why these actions were being carried out if no official separation policy exists, and a description of the disciplinary actions planned against those who engaged in such treatment. At the time the letter was sent, several hundred migrant children had already been separated from their families. However, it should have served as a wakeup call to reverse your actions and refrain from inflicting needless pain against immigrant families.

Unfortunately, the reply we received from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on April 23, 2018 did not heed our call. Instead, it claimed that your administration makes a determination on a case-by-case basis based on the totality-of some unspecified circumstances. ICE flatly denied the existence of a broad policy of removal, but nonetheless justified the separation of migrant families on the basis of protecting children from smugglers. At no point did the response explain how Border Patrol Agents make the determination that children are in the presence of smugglers, other than citing to the fact that factors exist.

Since that letter was sent, the American people have spoken out and your administration has engaged in a near-endless array of obfuscations to justify this horrific policy while also denying its very existence. You and members of your cabinet have continued to deny that there is a uniform policy, abrogated any sense of responsibility by blaming Democrats for your own choices, falsely stated that you were required to undertake such action by existing law, and even quoted verses from the Bible that were used to justify slavery in your defense. However, you have also conveniently forgotten the biblical verses commanding us to be kind to the stranger. At the core of democratic governance is accountability to the people and your pattern of dishonesty makes such accountability unnecessarily difficult to obtain.

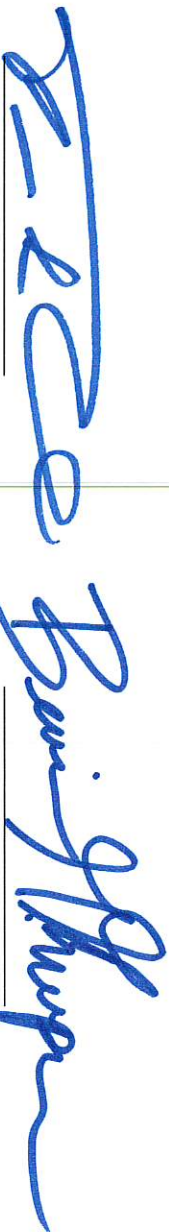
Your executive order titled "Affording Congress an Opportunity to Address Family Separation" continues this pattern of lies while perpetuating your assault against immigrant families. This horrendous and inhumane action would forcefully imprison immigrant children in violation of the 1997 Flores agreement, continue your zero-tolerance policy of criminal prosecution against immigrants, and instruct the Secretary of Defense to construct even more facilities for the detention of immigrant families. It would not end your policy of child abuse against immigrants entering the country from the southern border and begs the question of whether your intent in separating immigrant children from their families was indeed to bring an end to the Flores agreement. Over the past few days, news reports have also indicated that immigrant children have been forcibly medicated, transported thousands of miles away from their families, and that army attorneys have been called into the service of the Department of Justice to prosecute immigrants, marking an increased militarization of our border and mistreatment of immigrant children at the hands of state authorities.

We therefore write to object in the strongest possible terms to your policy of child abuse and intimidation against immigrants from minority communities and call upon you to instead pursue a policy of compassion that protects the integrity of the family unit while adhering to the terms of the Flores agreement. We also seek answers to the following questions:

1. Will you commit to permanently refrain from separating immigrant children from their families and not return to this policy, which the American people have resoundingly rejected?
2. What is the basis of your claimed legal authority to invalidate the 1997 Flores agreement, which provides essential protections to immigrant children?
3. Will you commit to reuniting more than 2,000 immigrant children who have been separated from their families with their loved ones?
4. What is your comprehensive plan for reuniting these separated immigrant children with their families?

Ultimately, this is about basic human rights for children and their families. Unfortunately, your administration has shown disdain for protecting vulnerable children who are fleeing violence and destruction in their own countries. The emotional and mental anguish on these children from such an ordeal is immeasurable. This issue is about what is right, what is human, and what is decent. We call on you to listen to the vast majority of people from both political parties who reject your state-sponsored abuse.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member, House Committee on Homeland Security



Yvette D. Clarke
Chair, CBC Immigration Task Force




Barbara Lee
Member of Congress


John Lewis

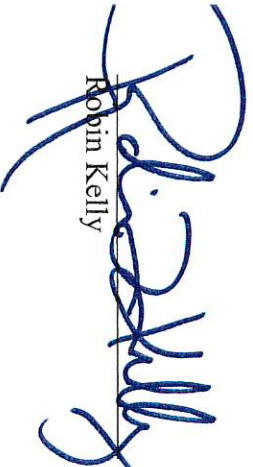

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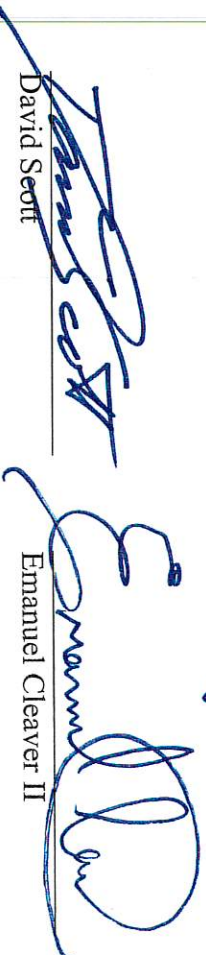

Donald M. Payne, Jr.

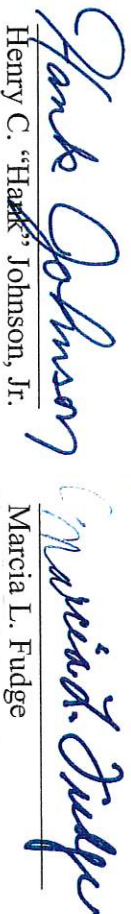

Robin Kelly

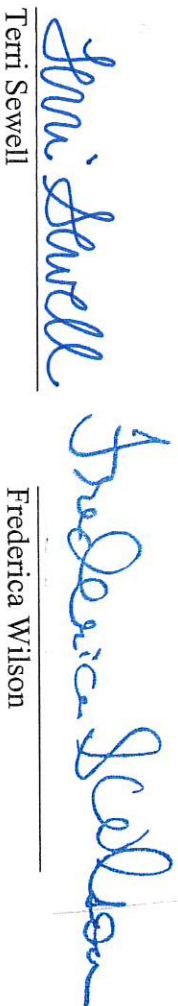

Val Demings

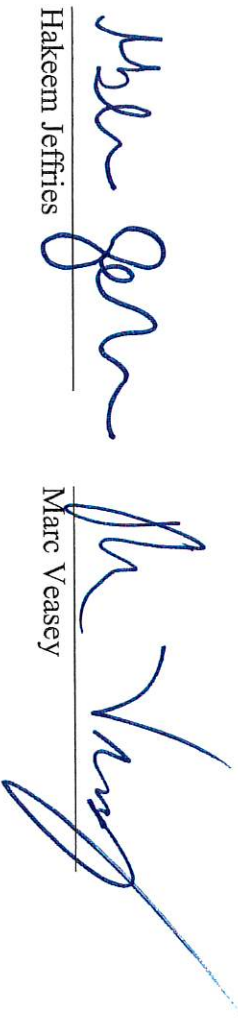

Eleanor Holmes Norton


Sheila Jackson Lee


David Scott

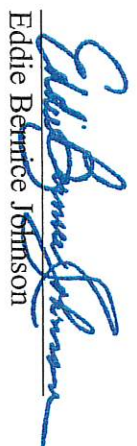

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.


Terri Sewell

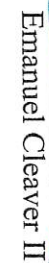

Hakeem Jeffries


Bonnie Watson Coleman

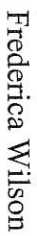

A. Donald McEachin

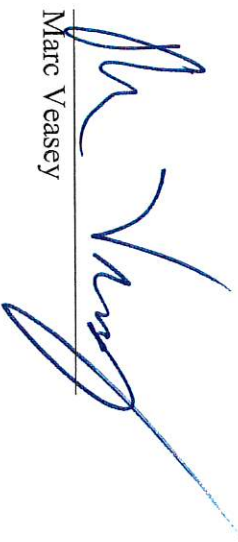

Eddie Bernice Johnson

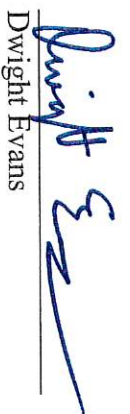

Danny K. Davis


Emanuel Cleaver II


Marcia L. Fudge


Frederica Wilson


Marc Veasey


Dwight Evans