

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 30, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

We are concerned about recent reports that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is removing unaccompanied children to countries where they fear violence, in violation of their legal rights under the Trafficking Victim Protections Reauthorization Act (TVPRA).

Last week, the Trump Administration ordered asylum-seekers removed to other countries without reviewing their claims of persecution. At the time, officials said that unaccompanied children would be exempt from this order. DHS, however, has now applied this policy to children who fled violence and traveled to the United States alone, sending them back on their own to the very countries they fled out of fear.

Unaccompanied children fleeing violence are among the most vulnerable groups seeking our help. They make up less than ten percent of the people encountered at the border. Under the TVPRA, children are to be transferred from the border to the Department of Health and Human Services within 72 hours, where they can then be reunited with family members or other sponsors while their legal claims are decided.

Reports that DHS is not following the TVPRA are deeply troubling. We have an obligation to ensure the health and safety of these children. Children do not have to be put in harm's way to protect us from the coronavirus pandemic. DHS has the ability and capacity to protect both these children and the public. We request that DHS stop this practice immediately.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Senate Judiciary Committee



Jerrold Nadler
Chairman
House Judiciary Committee



Richard J. Durbin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Immigration
Senate Judiciary Committee



Zoe Lofgren
Chair
Subcommittee on
Immigration and Citizenship
House Judiciary Committee

cc: The Honorable Lindsey Graham, Chairman, Senate Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Jim Jordan, Ranking Member, House Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable John Cornyn, Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration, Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Ken Buck, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Immigration and
Citizenship, House Committee on the Judiciary