

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

David J. Venturella
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Secretary Mullin and Acting Director Venturella:

We write to express our profound concern about your Administration's separation of families through the detention and deportation of parents and primary caregivers. We demand that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) immediately comply with existing protections for detained parents and provide full transparency regarding the number of children impacted by these enforcement actions.

Since January 20, 2025, ICE has detained and deported thousands of parents, leaving many U.S. citizen children separated from their caregivers. We are increasingly seeing evidence that ICE is not following its Detained Parents Directive¹ that directs staff to make efforts to allow parents to establish custody arrangements and are denying parents' requests to be deported with their children. These actions are tearing families apart and placing vulnerable children at serious risk of harm.

Recent reporting reveals the staggering scale of this crisis. An investigation found that in just the first seven months of President Trump's second term, at least 11,000 U.S. citizen children had a parent detained.² Another report estimates based on demographic data that to date, more than 145,000 U.S. citizen children have experienced the detention of a parent since President Trump returned to office with roughly three-quarters of those children being U.S. citizens.³ The reporting describes parents being taken from children as young as four months old⁴ as well as protesters forming a human tunnel to take a three-year-old child to safety as ICE surrounded the

¹ *Detention and Removal of Alien Parents and Legal Guardians of Minor Children*, ICE (July 2, 2025), <https://www.ice.gov/detain/parental-interest>.

² Jeff Ernsthausen, Mario Ariza, McKenzie Funk, Mica Rosenberg and Gabriel Sandoval, *Trump Has Detained the Parents of More Than 11,000 U.S. Citizen Kids*, ProPublica (Mar. 23, 2026), <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-family-deportations-ice-citizen-kids>.

³ Maria Cancia, Nissi Cantu, Lanique Howard, and Tara Watson, *The Administration has Detained 400,000 Immigrants: What Do We Know About Their Children*, Brookings Institution (May 18, 2026), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-administration-has-detained-400000-immigrants-what-do-we-know-about-their-children/>.

⁴ See Footnote 2.

home.⁵ Educators across the country are often bearing the brunt of these separations, going above and beyond to support families and children who have been separated. And teenagers are increasingly caring for younger siblings, struggling to balance their own futures with working to pay for essentials, like rent, health care, and groceries.⁶ In one particularly egregious family separation case, Wendy Hernandez Reyes, a single mother of a three-year-old toddler, Orlin, was picked up during a traffic stop by the local sheriff and turned over to ICE. Despite her pleas to be released to care for her son and later, to be deported with him, ICE deported her alone. Orlin was left in the custody of his uncle, who abused and murdered him.⁷

Further, dozens of children of immigrants have been put in foster care over the last year as a result of the detention or deportation of their parents, but this number is likely far higher.⁸ The increase in children left behind in the wake of their parents' detention or deportation has led several states to pass laws to preserve parents' custodial rights and prevent affected children from going into foster care.⁹

Your Administration's family separation practices are unacceptable. There are an estimated 5.6 million American children living with a parent or family member who is undocumented—85 percent of those children are under 15 years old.¹⁰ Separation from a parent is profoundly traumatic for children and can result in serious health and psychological issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and toxic stress.¹¹

As such, we request that you respond to the following questions no later than July 30, 2026.

⁵ Sasha Goldstein and Lucy Tompkins, *Chaos Breaks Out at Scene of ICE Arrests in South Burlington*, Seven Days (Mar. 11, 2026), <https://www.sevendaysvt.com/news/dozens-protest-at-scene-of-ice-action-in-south-burlington>.

⁶ Jack Brook & Sara Cline, *Immigration crackdown leaves teens to care for siblings after parents get detained*, L.A. TIMES (Dec. 12, 2025) <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2025-12-12/immigration-crackdown-leaves-teens-to-care-for-siblings-after-parents-get-detained>.

⁷ Maria Sacchetti, *She was deported without her toddler. Then ICE blamed her for his killing*, WASHINGTON POST (May 16, 2026) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2026/05/16/she-was-deported-without-her-toddler-then-ice-blamed-her-his-murder>.

⁸ Jackie Llanos, *Dozens of Kids Entered Foster Care After Immigration Agents Detained Their Parents*, NOTUS (Feb. 10, 2026), <https://www.notus.org/immigration/immigrant-detention-deportation-foster-care-data>.

⁹ Jazmin Orozco Rodriguez, *States Change Custody Laws to Keep Children of Detained Immigrants Out of Foster Care*, CNN (Apr. 16, 2026), <https://www.cnn.com/2026/04/15/health/detained-immigrant-children-foster-care-kff>.

¹⁰ Matthew Lisiecki, Kevin Velasco, and Tara Watson, *What Will Deportations Mean for the Child Welfare System?*, Brookings Institution (Apr. 22, 2025), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-will-deportations-mean-for-the-child-welfare-system/>.

¹¹ Johayra Bouza et al., *The Science is Clear: Separating Families Has Long-Term Damaging Psychological and Health Consequences for Children, Families, and Communities*, Society for Research in Child Development (June 18, 2018), <https://www.srcd.org/briefs-fact-sheets/the-science-is-clear>.

1. Can you confirm that the Detained Parents Directive is still in effect? If so, what training do ICE officers receive to ensure compliance?
2. What accountability measures do you have in place to ensure compliance with the Detained Parents Directive?
3. Since January 20, 2025, how many parents or primary caregivers of U.S. citizen children has ICE detained?
4. Since January 20, 2025, how many parents or primary caregivers of U.S. citizen children has ICE deported?
5. How many U.S. citizen children have had one or more parents detained by ICE since January 20, 2025?
6. How many U.S. citizen children have had one or more parents deported by ICE since January 20, 2025?
7. Since January 20, 2025, how many detained parents have requested to be deported together with their children?
 - a. For each case, please specify the outcome, including whether the children were deported with their parent(s) or remained in the United States.
8. What steps does ICE take before deporting a parent to ensure that minor children will have a safe and stable caregiver and parents do not lose their parental rights due to immigration enforcement?

We demand that you immediately comply with existing protections for detained parents to prevent further harm to children and families. We look forward to your prompt response on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



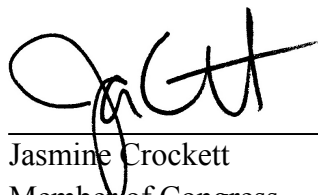
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



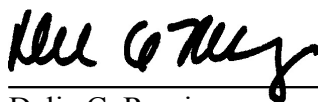
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



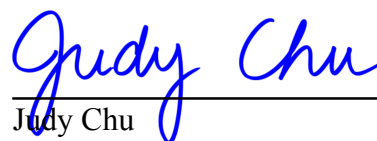
Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



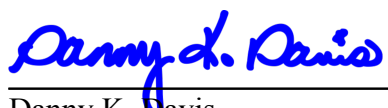
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



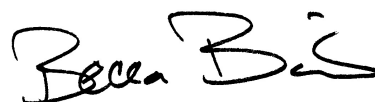
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



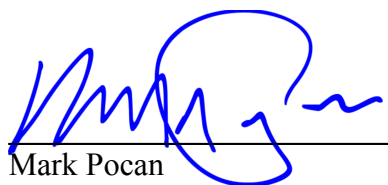
Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter, M.D.
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



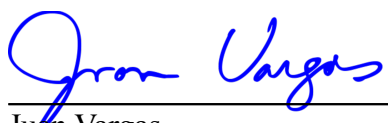
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress