



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

June 21, 2018

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Alex M. Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Attorney General Sessions, Secretary Nielsen, and Secretary Azar:

We are writing today regarding our concern about the safety and the security of families with children immigrating to the United States.

We support the defense of our nation's borders and all who work to keep us safe. We are encouraged by President Trump's recent executive order to end the practice of family separation. Policies allowing children to be separated from their parents are in direct conflict with America's humanitarian responsibility and our nation's history of protecting those seeking safety. We can enforce our laws and do so in a humane manner to respect families from any nation.

We are seeking clarification on the guidance used to carry out your duties encountering and processing immigrants crossing the U.S. border. While there may be rare instances which justify federal enforcement to separate a parent from their child, we seek clarification on how those determinations are made, and any additional statutory reforms that Congress must provide to ensure no family is needlessly separated. While efforts are underway in Congress to reform our immigration laws to prevent the separation of families, together with the President's executive order directing the care and unity of families encountered at the border, we seek to better understand, and help others to understand, the responsibilities and process involved with your respective agencies. Specifically we request responses to the following questions:

1. How many children have been separated from their parents while crossing the U.S. border in the past five years, each year, crossing both;
 - a. illegally to gain entrance and,
 - b. in seeking asylum at legal ports of entry?

2. When encountering a family unit (at least one parent traveling with a child) how are your agencies processing those encounters under the following circumstances:
 - a. At a legal U.S. port of entry?
 - b. If apprehended crossing the border at locations other than ports of entry?
3. What agency guidance or statute has been used to justify separations for illegal entry and for those seeking asylum?
4. If a parent is separated from their child for any period of time, either during processing or in temporary detention:
 - a. What procedures are followed to ensure parents are made aware of the welfare of a child in HHS custody?
 - b. What procedures are followed to assist and expedite family reunification following any separation period?
 - c. How are your respective agencies coordinating your responsibilities between DOJ, DHS, and HHS to ensure the timely and safe reunification of families?
5. What specific training is offered to DOJ, DHS and HHS personnel to ensure the well-being for children is prioritized and maintained throughout any processing or separation period?
6. Given the increase of concern over family separation, what actions are your agencies taking to ensure there is no confusion among personnel processing families crossing our border?
7. Do your respective agencies require additional statutory authority to ensure no family is separated needlessly when entering the country?
8. Given President Trump's executive order in response to family separation, please provide information on how that executive order;
 - a. Will be interpreted by your agencies?
 - b. How does this order change your current procedures?
 - c. How will your agencies implement this policy change to ensure no family is needlessly separated and to help reunite those currently separated?

We believe there is nothing more important than family, and especially in protecting the well-being of children. We look forward to your prompt and complete response. As Congress continues to work for permanent reform, it is critical we have an understanding of how your agencies implement President Trump's executive order, and enforce the laws of our nation.

Sincerely,



STEVE STIVERS
Member of Congress



JACK BERGMAN
Member of Congress




DON BACON
Member of Congress



SUSAN BROOKS
Member of Congress



MIKE COFFMAN
Member of Congress



BARBARA COMSTOCK
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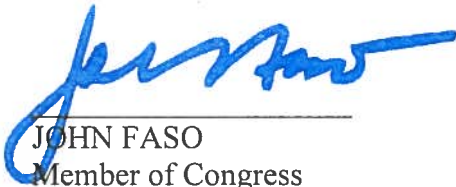
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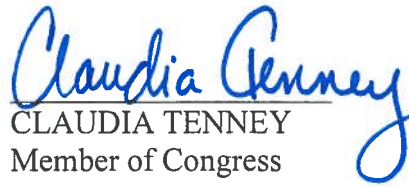
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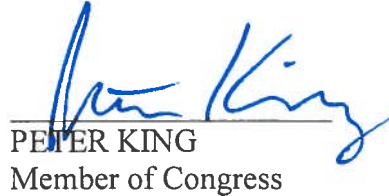
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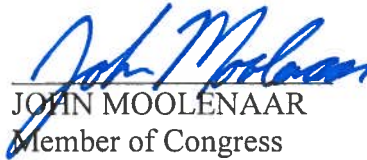
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