

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 21, 2018

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

As you continue the process of writing funding legislation for Fiscal Year 2019, we request that the Committee include appropriate language to make clear that Congress does not intend to provide funding or support for the cruel policy of family separation which has been carried out by the Administration.

Over the past months, we have watched in horror as hundreds of families have been separated when entering the United States. There has been a significant increase in family separations since the Department of Justice adopted a “zero-tolerance policy” in May 2018, and it is likely that even more families will be separated as a result of recent actions that will make fewer immigrants eligible for asylum. Separating children, some still infants, from their parents is an inhumane policy which shocks the conscience.

What limited reporting exists about the impact of these newly implemented policies is devastating. Last week, a father who was separated from his children after seeking asylum died while in custody, apparently from suicide. Reporters this week described a case in which a child was forcibly taken from a mother while breastfeeding. There are also reports that having nearly exhausted shelter space for children, the Administration is considering constructing “tent cities” on military installations.

The Administration’s policy of family separation is anathema to our values as a nation. The children who suffer irrevocable harm due to separation are not a means to demonstrate anti-immigration bona fides or create a deterrent on future immigrants - they are children who deserve to be treated with decency and empathy, just as we treat our own children.

Despite the President’s June 20th Executive Order, which leaves many important issues unsettled, Congress should still pass legislation ensuring we keep families together, and we urge you to use the FY19 Appropriations process to protect families and children. Accordingly we request the following:

1. In relevant Appropriations legislation, the Committee should include language making clear that family separation is not an appropriate or endorsed policy, and restrict the use of funds for policies that separate families who enter the United States; and

2. If any agency requests authority to reprogram existing funding to increase capacity for children separated from their parents, including the construction of “tent cities” on military bases, the Committee must reject these requests.

The Administration’s policy of separating children from their parents and guardians must end, and the Congress must not be complicit in this assault on our values as a nation. The Appropriations Committee and the Congress can draw a line, making it abundantly clear that the funding provided to agencies will no longer be used for this purpose.

Sincerely,