

Dear Member of Congress,

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our strong support for the *Humane Enforcement and Legal Protections (HELP) for Separated Children Act* and the *HELP Separated Families Act*, introduced by Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard, which codify protections for children who may be separated from their parents by immigration enforcement actions in the interior. As organizations committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families, we stand united against the administration's harsh immigration enforcement agenda and the trauma it is imposing on [more than a quarter of children](#) in the United States, the majority of whom are U.S. citizens. These companion bills represent a critical step toward mitigating the harm of enforcement actions on children.

There may be no greater threat to children's emotional security than the fear of being separated from a parent. Research consistently demonstrates that [family separation](#) has harmful effects on children's psychological and physical well-being. Children whose parents are [detained or deported](#) often suffer from physical and mental health difficulties, including irregular sleeping or eating habits, developmental regressions, and increased anger and withdrawal. These outcomes are most pronounced when children witness a parent's arrest and when they experience long periods of separation from their parent. Children who are left behind following separation from a parent are also at greater risk of entering the child welfare system.

The *HELP Separated Children Act* includes provisions that would help to mitigate some of the stress and instability of immigration enforcement on children by allowing parents to arrange for the care of their children prior to being taken into custody and prior to deportation; supporting continued contact between detained parents and children; and ensuring parents are able to fully participate in child welfare proceedings. The bill also seeks to minimize trauma for children who are present during enforcement actions by requiring agents to undergo training and to refrain from interrogating parents in front of children or using children as translators.

Meanwhile, the *HELP Separated Families Act* includes critical provisions to address barriers that may prevent children in the child welfare system from being able to reunify with a detained or deported parent or to be placed in the care of a family member. For example, the bill prohibits immigration status alone from being a factor in placement decisions and permits certain forms of foreign identification for purposes of a background check. The bill also seeks to prevent unnecessary permanent separation by allowing child welfare agencies to delay the process for terminating parental rights in cases when a parent is detained or deported, unless certain conditions are met.

These important bills could not be timelier following the administration's [recent announcement](#) that they will be undertaking massive raids in communities around the country. Children are increasingly feeling the effects of the administration's interior immigration enforcement policies, including making every undocumented immigrant a priority for deportation and scaling back the ability of immigration officials to exercise discretion when making decisions about detaining or deporting parents of U.S. citizen children. As a result, millions of children are increasingly vulnerable to being separated from a parent or loved one.

No child should have to live in fear of losing a parent. As organizations who are committed to serving and advocating for children, youth, and families, we urge you to co-sponsor the *HELP Separated Children* and *HELP Separated Families Acts*.

Sincerely,