



National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association

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National Indian Head Start Directors Association

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On behalf of the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Indian Head Start community, we strongly object to the forced separation of children at the United States border and demand that the children currently in detention be immediately reunited with their families. We are also gravely concerned with the Administration's zero-tolerance policy, which allows the Department of Homeland Security to detain families with children indefinitely while their immigration cases are pending. We demand that the Administration take additional steps to end the inhumane and prolonged mistreatment of migrant families in detention facilities, which disparately impacts young children in their early stages of development.

Statements from Executive Directors:

Head Start has been successfully serving children and families for more than fifty years through a comprehensive 'whole child' model that includes education, health, nutritional services, and strong parent engagement. The longstanding success of Head Start programs is attributed to our comprehensive approach and nurturing of each young child's social-emotional developmental needs. As experts in early childhood development, we are deeply dismayed with the trauma that has been inflicted upon 2,300 children held by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Research demonstrates that highly stressful experiences, like family separation, can cause irreparable harm to young children impacting both their short-term and long-term health.

Delia Garcia, Executive Director of the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association stated: "We strongly condemn the administration's current "zero tolerance" policy which has led to the separation of thousands of children from their parents, and we remain deeply concerned over the potential trauma and long-term damaging effects of this policy. Forcibly separating children from their parents at the U.S. border is cruel and disregards everything we know about children's safety and well-being. We believe that families belong together, and will continue working with others to make sure this happens."

Lee Turney, President of the National Indian Head Start Directors Association stated: "Native Americans continue to deal with the long-lasting and detrimental effects of the transgenerational trauma caused by the forced separation of native children from their families and culture by the government run boarding schools. The National Indian Head Start Directors Association strongly opposes the forced separation and detention of children and the avoidable trauma it causes."

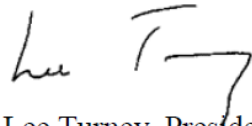
Conclusion:

Protecting children is not a partisan issue. We join the voices from across the country - ranging from former first ladies to religious leaders to civil rights leaders to child welfare experts and pediatricians – all calling for an end to the inhumane treatment of migrant families. We urge all of our elected leaders in Washington to stand up in support of families and the promise that all children hold for the future. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Administration and Congress moving forward to ensure that the comprehensive cognitive and social-emotional needs of young migrant children are met as their families await legal proceedings. Migrant families who are clearly seeking a better life for their children must be treated with dignity, and their children deserve the necessary support to protect their future success and wellbeing.

Sincerely,



Delia Garcia, Executive Director
National Migrant & Season Head Start Ass'n



Lee Turney, President
National Indian Head Start Directors Ass'n