

June 10, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Thune and Minority Leader Schumer -

The 88 undersigned organizations committed to advancing child and family wellbeing urge the Senate to reject the provisions of the reconciliation bill passed by the House that would dismantle the protection system for unaccompanied immigrant children. The reconciliation bill would prevent children from reuniting with their loved ones, and it would contravene the safeguards enshrined in the bipartisan Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPPRA) of 2008 with devastating consequences for these vulnerable children. As organizations dedicated to protecting the wellbeing of all children, we urge you to oppose these provisions and build upon—rather than dismantle—trafficking protections for children.

The exorbitant fee structure in the bill would prevent family unity and place children at greater risk of trafficking and other dangers. The bill would create entirely new fees that require potential sponsors of unaccompanied children, including parents, to pay a minimum \$3,500 sponsorship fee and a minimum \$5,000 bond that has no guarantee of being reimbursed. This cumulative \$8,500 would be out of reach for many parents and other potential loving sponsors, especially when coupled with the other fees created by the bill, including a \$5,000 fine for individuals who enter the United States between ports of entry—even for unaccompanied children who may not know how or where to access ports. This is outrageous. Imagine if we had a national policy that required foster parents to pay the U.S government to take in a child in foster care. Precluding good faith sponsors from coming forward would lead to children remaining in government custody longer at the expense of their wellbeing and in opposition to the directives of the TVPPRA and longstanding child welfare principles favoring family unity. These actions are as anti-family as any action by government in recent years.

The bill contains a new mandate directing the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to collect information about potential sponsor's immigration status and that of any adult members of their household during the sponsor vetting process, and it requires ORR to share that information with the Department of Homeland Security for purposes of immigration enforcement. The primary consideration in evaluating potential sponsors should be their ability to provide a safe and caring home for the child. In contrast, this provision would create fear that would further discourage loving sponsors from applying to sponsor children. In combination with the sponsorship fees, the massive costs and fear of immigration consequences created by this bill would create a situation

ripe for exploitation by bad actors who do not care for children's best interests. Inevitably, increasing numbers of unaccompanied children would end up in unsafe placements, potentially facing labor exploitation, trafficking, abuse, or other dangers.

Another provision of the bill would result in many unaccompanied children being returned to situations of trafficking or other danger in their country of origin. The bill creates a new method to summarily return unaccompanied children without transferring them to ORR as required by the TVPRA. Transfer to ORR is crucial to ensuring that these children receive robust trafficking screenings, basic services, and legal information that is necessary to verify their safety and secure their opportunity to seek protection. The reconciliation bill circumvents this protection system in favor of cursory screenings that have consistently failed to identify evidence of trafficking or other protection needs.

The bill would create myriad new threats for children. At the same time, it does not allow the funding it provides to ORR to be used for social services and legal assistance for unaccompanied children, which are often the most effective methods of protecting child wellbeing. Lawyers are vital to recognizing, and helping extricate children from, situations of exploitation and to securing these children's stability through immigration status. Social workers conduct in-home visitation of released unaccompanied children, support children's educational enrollment and progress, and provide other assistance important to upholding the safety of sponsorship settings and promoting children's integration into local communities.

Our work is guided by the principle that a child's wellbeing should be the paramount consideration when making decisions that impact children. This country's strength and our history has been built on strong families and our welcoming of these families, children and youth. This legislation is antithetical to that principle, and we urge you to oppose provisions that will directly harm children.

Signed,

National Organizations

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Psychological Association Services

Association of Community Human Service Agencies

Caring Across Generations

Center for the Study of Social Policy

Child Welfare League of America

Coalition on Human Needs

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

Everstand

Family Centered Treatment Foundation
First Place for Youth
Foster Care Training Today
Foster Love
Foster Parent College
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Center on Adoption and Permanency
National Family Preservation Network
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Youth Catalytics
Youth Law Center

State, Local and Tribal Organizations

Abrazo Adoption Associates
Adoptions of Indiana
Aldea Children and Family Services
Barnstable No Place for Hate
Behavioral Health Contractors' Association (BHCA)
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
Children's Home Society of Virginia
Children's Institute
Children's Law Center of California
Children's League of Massachusetts
Children's Service Society of Utah
Christ Child House
Clover
Cornell Consulting
DC Family & Youth Initiative
Dimondale Adolescent Care Facility
Disability Rights California
El Pueblo Unido of Atlantic City
Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services
Frontier Centre For Community Empowerment FROCECE
Hillsides
Illinois Collaboration on Youth
Impact Living Services
JCCA
John Burton Advocates for Youth

Lawyers For Children
Lincoln Families
LIRS-LSC Columbia TFC (SC)
Lutheran Family and Children's Services of MO
Lutheran Services Carolinas
Mary's Path
McLean Speech and Language Pathology Associates
Multidisciplinary Institute for Child Welfare (MICW)
NAFI CT
National Association of Social Workers-Maryland Chapter
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
New Jersey Department of Children and Families
North American Family Institute
North Star Family Center
Oak Grove Center
Options Counseling and Family Services
Paths for Families
Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth & Family Services
Present Moment Integrative Therapy
PSU, LLC
Rancho San Antonio
Redwood Community Services
Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families
San Diego Center for Children
Shelter Youth and Family Services
Side by Side
South Coast Community Services
St Anne's Family Services
St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin
TEAM for West Virginia Children
The Home for Little Wanderers
The Kempe Foundation
Trinity Youth Services
University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work
University of Pittsburgh, PA Child Welfare Resource Center
Victor
Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services
Walden Family Services
Wayfinder Family Services
Wisconsin Association of Family & Children's Agencies