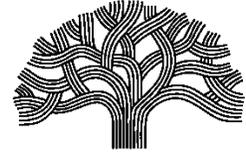


CITY OF OAKLAND



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June 18, 2018

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Keep Families Together Act (S. 3036) – SUPPORT

Dear members of the United States Senate:

I write to express my support for the Keep Families Together Act (S. 3036) and strongly urge you to cosponsor this essential piece of legislation.

On May 7, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that all adults who arrive at the border would be prosecuted for illegal entry, even if they attempt to seek asylum. At a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in May, Customs and Border Protection testified that 658 children were taken from 638 parents during a 14-day period in May, an average of 47 children being taken from their parents each day.

The change has resulted in federal law enforcement routinely and systematically separating children from their parents. The United States has long been a refuge for parents and children fleeing persecution in war torn and ravaged parts of the world. This change in policy flies in the face of our nation's values and obligation to show global leadership in the protection of human rights. Indeed, how can we stand among the 47 nations as one of the member states on the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), while the federal government is undertaking a ruthless policy that rips children from the arms of their parents. The U.S. is already the only nation to refuse to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN Human Rights Chief, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, opened his recent speech at the 38th session of the UNHRC with the following statement on the Administration's new policy: "The thought that any state would seek to deter parents by inflicting such abuse on children is unconscionable."

Seeking asylum is a legally protected route to gain legal residence in our country, and one that expressly involves arriving at the border. To deny these families consideration under asylum laws is unconstitutional. Furthermore, we understand that these separations are taking place regardless of whether the family is seeking asylum or not.

Aside from the fact that prosecuting individuals who are seeking asylum may violate domestic and international law, the Administration's action is morally reprehensible. I am sickened by reports that children are being held in "child care facilities" such as a former Walmart in Brownsville, Texas, where 1,500 children are living five to a room. I am horrified by reports that a woman's baby was ripped from her arms while she was breastfeeding. This behavior harkens back to darker times, when millions of Americans gave their lives seeking to protect freedom, democracy and the persecuted.

Such a ruthless, heartless, and ill-conceived change in policy is what one would expect from an authoritarian regime, not the nation that I love and respect. It does not reflect the sentiment of the people of this great land or the values of Oakland and for all which we stand.

Please ensure that children are immediately reunited with their parents and prevent any further implementation of this practice, which is all about politics and nothing about national security.

I urge you to cosponsor the Keep Families Together Act (S. 3036) and support any legislative effort to immediately end this harmful and unethical practice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Libby Schaaf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "L".

Libby Schaaf
Mayor
City of Oakland