

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 20, 2018

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Chairman
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley,

We write to respectfully request an oversight hearing regarding the administration's new "Zero Tolerance" family separation policy, announced by Attorney General Sessions on April 6, 2018. This policy is responsible for hundreds of children being forcibly separated from their families, falsely labeled "unaccompanied alien children" (UAC), and transferred to the custody of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). This cruel treatment of children and families arriving to the United States demands immediate and direct Congressional oversight.

While limited media reports and Senate hearings have shed some light on the "Zero Tolerance" policy, its exact scope and impact remains unclear. For example, during a recent Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) official stated that between May 6, 2018 and May 19, 2018, 638 adults were referred for prosecution, who had a total of 658 children with them.¹ According to another report, the Department of Health and Human Services identified 10,900 unaccompanied minors in its custody as of May 31, 2018, with 959 separated from family units since May 6, 2018.² These snapshots provide some useful context, but the data largely fails to show how many children have been forced into UAC status over the entire time this policy has been in effect.

In addition to definitive accounting of the number of children rendered unaccompanied by the "Zero Tolerance" policy, the Senate must seek answers from the administration on the standards of care provided to these children, including staffing ratios, credentials for contractors, and background checks for individuals caring for the children. How soon after separation from their parents are children granted access to comprehensive health care services, including trauma support and mental health services; and under what conditions are children permitted to communicate with their parents and attorneys?

These questions and many others must be promptly and thoroughly examined in order for the Senate to fulfil its duty to oversee the administration's new "Zero Tolerance" Policy.

¹ Miroff, Nick. "Trump's 'zero Tolerance' at the Border Is Causing Child Shelters to Fill up Fast." The Washington Post. May 29, 2018.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *communication to Congress*, June 1, 2018

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Doug Jones
United States Senator



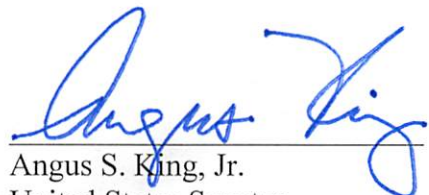
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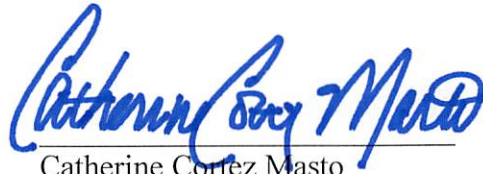
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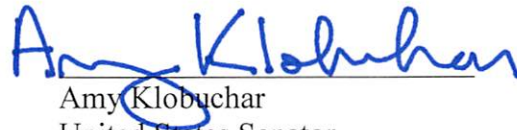
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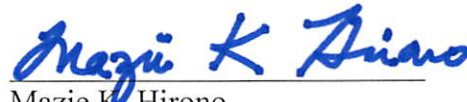
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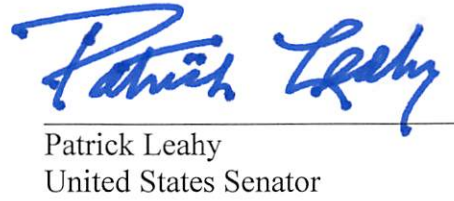
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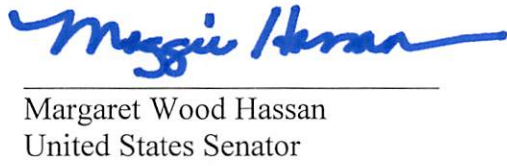
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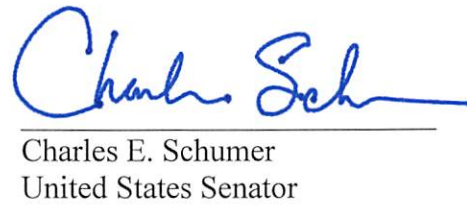
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

CC:

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
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