



June 12, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago joins with the more than 540 organizations from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico that have well-recognized expertise in the fields of child welfare, juvenile justice, and child health, development, and safety. This group first sent letters to you in January. Since then, DHS has implemented a systematic practice of separating children from their parents—as many as 658 children in just two weeks in May.

Catholic Charities joins this group in writing again today, after the formal implementation of practices to separate immigrant families, to renew our shared concern that your agency is harming children by taking them from their parents to deter or punish parents and children who come to our border seeking protection. The separation of children from their parents to deter migration, or to punish migration, will have significant and long-lasting consequences for the safety, health, development, and well-being of children. We therefore urgently request that the Administration reverse course on its practice of separating families at the border.

Countless reports have documented that these families are fleeing persecution and violence in their countries, and come here seeking protection. While many come from Central American countries, the parents and children arrive at our border from all over the world, including countries in Africa, the Caribbean, South America, Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

Since early May, DHS in collaboration with the Department of Justice has routinely separated immigrant children from their parents and families. Parents may be placed in adult immigration detention centers and/or summarily deported, while their children are transferred to the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in facilities across the country—as far away as Illinois, Washington, New York, Florida, and Michigan. HHS bears the responsibility of caring for the traumatized children and finding suitable, alternative caregivers. The children could remain in government care for months or more than a year, during which time the continued separation from their parents would compound their trauma and the time it would take them to recover and return to a trajectory of good health and normal development.

We are deeply concerned that recent agency actions institutionalize such harm by taking children from their parents as a matter of policy.

THE CATHOLIC CHARITIES *of the* ARCHDIOCESE *of* CHICAGO

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We urge you to abandon current policies and practices that systematically separate children from their families absent evidence that a specific parent posed a threat to the safety and well-being of his or her child, as required by the laws of all 50 states. Should you have any questions about the serious concerns raised in this letter, or wish to respond to us directly, please contact Laura Rios, Vice President for Child, Youth and Family Services at (312) 655-8570.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Msgr. Mike Boland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" and last name "Boland" clearly legible.

Monsignor Michael M. Boland, Administrator
President & CEO
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago