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February 11, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chairwoman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies

The Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

As you negotiate a Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) omnibus appropriations package, the undersigned 51 organizations—including 31 that directly provide services to unaccompanied children—strongly encourage you to adopt dedicated funding for post-release services (PRS). Specifically, **we urge you to adopt the distinct \$250 million in funding for unaccompanied children’s post-release services as specified in the Senate’s FY22 explanatory statement** for the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Unaccompanied children comprise one of the most vulnerable groups seeking help and protection. They have commonly fled from extreme violence and exploitation. Their immediate needs are provided by the network of dedicated shelters overseen by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Administration for Children and Families—needs that include a safe and stable environment, access to medical care, psychological care, and education. Most unaccompanied children stay in ORR care for 30–45 days, after which they unite with parents or close family within the United States.

Yet these children are vulnerable, and unaccompanied children’s particular vulnerability is explicitly recognized by both the U.S. government and the United Nations.¹ As children reunite with parents and close family, post-release services help to ensure that children retain access to needed services including psychosocial care, education, and legal services. Post-release services bridge gaps, and they help

to ensure continuity of care during a time of transition within families. Children’s vulnerability warrants attention and dedicated resources. Child-welfare researchers² and ORR staff studying and evaluating unaccompanied children’s care have concluded that an expansion of PRS would be in unaccompanied children’s best interests. We fully concur. The \$250 million in funding provided by the Senate’s explanatory statement is crucial for ensuring that all unaccompanied children have access to PRS.

Finally, we note that support for unaccompanied children is nonpartisan and diverse. The reauthorizations of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which govern the care of unaccompanied children, have been enacted on a bipartisan basis. Likewise, in a poll published last April, the majority of Americans agreed that the federal government’s highest immigration priority should be to provide safe treatment for unaccompanied children.³ In sum, the system of care for unaccompanied children reflects a shared set of national values: that children are children and should have what they need to grow and thrive.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

Sincerely,

AnnaMarie Bena

AnnaMarie Bena
Vice President

And the undersigned organizations,

Abbott House

Advocating Opportunity

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

American Red Cross

America's Voice

Bethany Christian Services

Board of Child Care of the United Methodist Church, Inc.

¹ *Flores et al. v Reno* Stipulated Settlement Agreement, CV 85-4544-RJK(Px) (C.D. Cal., Jan 17, 1997), <https://youthlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/1997/05/Flores-Settlement-Agreement-pdf>; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1997), Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum. Geneva: United Nations. <https://www.unhcr.org/3d4f91cf4.pdf>

² Jani, Jayshree (2017). “Reunification Is Not Enough: Assessing the Needs of Unaccompanied Migrant Youth.” *Families in Society* 98(2): 127–36. <https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.2017.98.18>; Meek, Shantel, Edyburn, Kelly, and Camille Smith (2021). *Federal policy and State Licensing Standards for the Operation of Facilities Housing Unaccompanied Migrant Children*. Tempe, AZ: The Children’s Equity Project. <https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/cep>

³ <https://apnorc.org/projects/public-is-concerned-about-bidens-handling-of-immigration-and-border-security/>

BOYSTOWN

Catholic Charities Boystown
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Home of Kingston "New Horizons"
Church World Service
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants
Endeavors
First Focus Campaign for Children
Freedom Network USA
Friends of Youth
Heartland Human Care Services
HIAS
Hispanic Federation
Holy Family Institute
Immigration Hub
ImmSchools
International Rescue Committee
International Youth Foundation
Justice At Last
Justice in Motion
Kids in Need of Defense
Latino Family Institute
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)
Make the Road New York
MercyFirst
National Education Association
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
PCC-EIS
Promote Inclusion Books
Seneca Family of Agencies
Sunny Glen Children's Home-New Day Resiliency Center

Tahirih Justice Center

The Children's Village

UndocuBlack Network

UNICEF USA

Union for Reform Judaism

VisionQuest

Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center

Witness at the Border

YouthCare