

July 31, 2019

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman, Judiciary Committee
United States Senate
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6050

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Minority Member, Judiciary Committee
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6050

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Feinstein,

We write today to express our strong opposition to S. 1494, the Secure and Protect Act of 2019. The bill would not resolve the current humanitarian crisis at the border; instead, it would foreclose lifesaving protection and subject children as young as toddlers to prolonged and harmful incarceration. Even worse, the bill fails to address the root causes of the problems leading so many to flee in the first instance. We urge you to reject these harmful measures and vote no on the bill.

The Secure and Protect Act of 2019 abandons America's legacy of responding fairly and compassionately to those in need of safety. As written, the bill would foreclose protection to some of the world's most vulnerable, including women and children; eliminate the ability of children to seek protection if they have been a victim of a severe form of trafficking; subject children to prolonged detention; close pathways to protection by pitting asylum seekers against refugees at a time when there are reports that the Administration is considering setting the refugee admissions number to zero; foreclose access to immigration programs that Congress has previously authorized; create fundamental due process concerns by precluding individualized reviews for humanitarian relief; subject children and families to mandatory secure detention with no exceptions; and would infringe on the rights of states by authorizing federal officials to question the decisions of juvenile and family court judges, an area almost exclusively reserved to the states.

Further, the bill would make sweeping changes to critical safety programs, including asylum, which would likely impact thousands in need of protection. Instead of basing protection on an individual's claim, the bill would create a statutory prohibition based on country of nationality, with no exceptions. For instance, any individual who is a national of a specified country, despite never having lived there, would be completely ineligible for asylum, even if they are being persecuted. The bill also fails to address the complexity of dual nationals, creating the real possibility that those in need of life saving protection might be statutorily prohibited because a country considers them a national.

Rather than consider legislation that punishes, detains, and categorically denies protection to vulnerable children and families, the Committee should consider common sense legislation that would address the root causes of the humanitarian crisis and provide fair and efficient asylum processing. The harmful proposals in the Secure and Protect Act of 2019 will not resolve the current situation and will leave children in clear danger.

For the reasons above and many more, we urge you to preserve America's historical and moral legacy as a place of refuge and fairness, and not move forward with this bill. Additionally, we ask members of this Committee to vote no on the bill.

Respectfully submitted,

National Organizations

Alliance of Baptists

America's Voice

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

American Federation of Teachers

American Friends Service Committee

American Immigration Lawyers Association

Amnesty International USA

Anti-Defamation League

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence

Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project

Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)

Campaign for Youth Justice

Center for American Progress

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Center for Reproductive Rights

Center for Victims of Torture

Child Welfare League of America
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Defense Fund
Church World Service
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Columbia Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic
CREDO
Detention Watch Network
Earthjustice
Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)
Families Belong Together
Farmworker Justice
First Focus on Children
Freedom for Immigrants
Freedom Network USA
HEAL Trafficking
HIAS
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
Humanity United Action
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Indivisible
International Refugee Assistance Project
International Rescue Committee
Justice Strategies
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)

Lawyers for Good Government
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Main Street Alliance
MoveOn
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Oxfam America
Partnership for America's Children
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
RAICES (Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services)
Quixote Center
Refugees International
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
Southeast Immigrant Rights Network
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Southern Poverty Law Center
Tahirih Justice Center
The Advocates for Human Rights
UndocuBlack Network
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

United We Dream

Voto Latino

We Are All America

Win Without War

Women's Refugee Commission

World Relief

Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

YWCA USA

ZERO TO THREE

State & Local Organizations

Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine

Amend Law LLC

Arkansas United

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago

Asian Americans Advancing Justice-LA

Austin Sanctuary Network

Carolina Immigrant Alliance, Inc.

CASA

Catholic Charities of the Texas Panhandle

Center Global (a program of the DC Center for the LGBT Community)

Child and Family Policy Center

Children's Defense Fund - TX

Children First for Oregon

Cleveland Jobs with Justice

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)

CRLN

Deportation Defense Legal Network

Diocese of Charleston Ecumenical Office

Don't Separate Families
East Harlem Community Health Committee, Inc.
Equality California
Families Rights Network
Family Action Network Movement (FANM)
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin Social Action Ministry
Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project
Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program
HOPE Border Institute
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Kino Border Initiative
Latino Social Work Network
Legal Aid Justice Center
Maine Children's Alliance
Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc.
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Migrant Center for Human Rights
Mi Maletín
NC Child
Nebraska Appleseed
New Harmony Presbytery
New Mexico Voices for Children
New York Council for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
New York Immigration Coalition
Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors
OneAmerica

Palmetto Friends Gathering (Society of Friends, Quakers)
Partnerships for Trauma Recovery
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Public Counsel
Reformed Church of Highland Park
Refugee Services of Texas
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium
SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center
SC Christian Action Council
SCAN NY - Supportive Children's Advocacy Network
Services, Immigrant Rights & Education Network (SIREN)
Silver State Equality-Nevada
South Carolina NAACP
South Texas Human Rights Center
St. John Neumann Church
The Green Valley/Sahuarita Samaritans
The Healing Way
Transformations CDC/Episcopal Church
UnLocal, Inc.
Voices for Vermont's Children