

June 20, 2018 President Donald J. Trump The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500 Dear President Trump, We write to you as a united and bipartisan group of Massachusetts State Senators, to denounce the immoral policy of separating children from their parents when they seek asylum at the United States border with Mexico. We believe this policy is toxic to our reputation as a country and, most importantly, damaging to the families it impacts. This policy has already separated over 2,300 children from their families; the federal government has an affirmative duty to reunite every family that was separated by this policy. Further, rising public knowledge of this new un-American practice by your administration has created outrage and deep sorrow across our country. In a time when politics regarding immigration policy has become more divisive than ever, response to these actions has united Republicans, Democrats, independents, family advocates, and business groups – all calling for the common sense practice to keep families united. In recent days we have watched closely as Secretary Nielsen, Attorney General Sessions, and others in your administration have sought to explain and give context for this reprehensible practice. It is clear based on these contradictory explanations that this policy, at best, is ill-advised and is being poorly implemented. As was written in a New Yorker headline this week, “The U.S. Has No Plan for the Immigrant Families It Is Tearing Apart”. The significant challenges facing our nation when “unaccompanied minors” arrive at the United States border and are detained are not new. In Massachusetts, we gained firsthand experience with some of these issues in 2014 when the Commonwealth (and other states across the nation) offered to temporarily house such minor children in secure facilities in our state while they were processed by federal immigration officials. This became necessary because of the significant increase in “unaccompanied minors” crossing the border with Mexico without their parents or other adults, leading to overfilling in federal holding facilities in border states. In this case though, this policy is creating a significant and costly humanitarian crisis for thousands of children by your administration’s own choosing. The policy - established by your administration - to separate children from the custody of their parents created this crisis. As we understand it, this current crisis stems from a policy decision that Attorney General Sessions made in recent months to begin a “zero tolerance” policy of criminally prosecuting every adult illegally crossing the border into the United States. In such cases in recent months, children have not been allowed to be held with their parents who have been arrested and charged with a federal crime, creating this current nightmare. This change in practice and policy was forecasted by your administration, including by your current Chief of Staff on March 6, 2017 when he told CNN he was considering implementing (then as Secretary of DHS) such a practice to deter illegal border crossings. It has been reported that nearly seventy separations of children from their parents are occurring per day, an unacceptable and frightening statistic. Clearly, this new practice has

created chaos and needed to be revoked immediately. Every day that this policy was in place, we created another generation of children who will face severe challenges in the future. We are fortunate in Massachusetts to have bipartisan consensus that rejects this policy. Governor Charlie Baker has referred to this policy as “inhumane treatment of children” and senior Senator Elizabeth Warren has labeled it an “outrage visited on the American people”. Among the many other voices that have spoken out across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in recent days. They remind us that when the United States has turned our back on children in peril, it has remained a stain on our nation’s promise and spirit. We ask you to take swift and decisive action to reunite every family that was separated by this inhumane and un-American policy. Please support pending legislation that would ameliorate the current circumstance through Congressional action to make sure this never happens again. We urge you to take action on this pressing matter as soon as possible. Respectfully, CC: Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen Attorney General Jeff Sessions White House Chief of Staff John Kelly Speaker of the House Paul Ryan Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer Senator Elizabeth Warren Senator Ed Markey Congressman Richard Neal Congressman Jim McGovern Congresswoman Niki Tsongas Congressman Joe Kennedy Congresswoman Katherine Clark Congressman Seth Moulton Congressman Mike Capuano Congressman Stephen Lynch Congressman Bill Keating Governor Charlie Baker

JULIAN CYR