



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

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June 19, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Madam Secretary,

Over the last several weeks, Americans and people around the world have been horrified as they have witnessed young children being ripped from their parents' arms and placed in holding facilities where they are caged by chain-link fences and sleep on mats with only Mylar sheets to keep them warm. This scene has played out as our government has implemented a "zero-tolerance" policy for illegal immigration requiring anyone apprehended crossing the border between ports of entry to be referred for criminal prosecution. This policy stance has resulted in the United States immigration authorities detaining and taking custody of almost 2,000 children. The enforcement of immigration laws is not the cause of public outcry here; but rather the widespread and intentional separation of families that is unequivocally objectionable.

It seems that at some point those entrusted with the leadership of a nation built upon the strength of immigrants seeking freedom, opportunity, and safety from persecution, have come to the conclusion that actions, which are contrary to the basic tenets of human decency, are necessary to protect the American way of life. The idea that a policy or practice of the United States of America should be such that is characterized as "government-sanctioned child abuse," by the President of the American Academy of Pediatrics is so incongruous with the ideals and values of our nation that there is no recourse for people of integrity and compassion but to condemn it and demand its cessation.

Further, it has been revealed that up to 1,000 children are likely being held at the recently re-opened Homestead Temporary Shelter for Unaccompanied Children overseen by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has not received any communication from either HHS or ORR regarding the re-opening of this facility, the presence of such a significant number of school-aged children, nor the details of provisions being made to educate these children.

Given that this facility is located within the State of Florida, and more specifically in Miami-Dade County, it is incumbent on me, as Superintendent of Schools for Miami-Dade County to reach out to your office seeking a dialogue regarding the educational services available to these children while they are being held in this facility. As you may be aware, Article IX, Section 1(a) of the Florida Constitution states that it is "a paramount duty of the state to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders." In fact, the constitutional mandate is that the state must make adequate provision for a "uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools" for all children in the state. This provision requires that all children, regardless of their immigration status, must be provided a public education while they are here.

Historically, M-DCPS has always provided educational services to unaccompanied immigrant minors. We provide teachers and deliver services to children residing at His House Children's Home, a non-profit, faith-based organization offering residential care and case management to unaccompanied children from Central America and other nations. Our District has even sent teachers and other educational support to Guantanamo during the Cuban refugee crisis. Further, M-DCPS also provided educational service to those children previously residing in the Homestead area during the influx of refugees from Central America; yet there has been no communication with our District regarding a reported 1,000 minors currently being detained at the Homestead Temporary Shelter for Unaccompanied Children since its re-opening. It is troubling that so many children are being held apart from any contact with their parents or family members and without access to those daily comforts of home. We should at least provide these children with the dignity of some connection with caring adults and access to educational services. Therefore, please let me know who my office may coordinate with, either locally or through your office in Washington, to ensure that these children, currently residing within Miami-Dade, receive the educational services to which they are constitutionally entitled and which we are morally obligated to provide.

Once again, I am adding my voice to the chorus of those from across the nation and around the world who are calling for the immediate end of the practice of separating minor children from their parents as part of immigration enforcement. These actions which have been carried out in the name of border security are not emblematic of a nation which holds itself out as a beacon of justice, humanity, and freedom. These actions do not represent the United States of America.

Please contact my office as soon as possible at 305 995-2940.

Sincerely



Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent

AMC:cpi
L1592

cc: School Board Members
School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet
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