DATE

Dear SENATOR’S OR REPRESENTATIVE’S NAME,

INCLUDE A BRIEF PARAGRAPH ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY HISTORY. YOU MIGHT MENTION WHERE YOUR PARENTS/GRANDPARENTS CAME FROM AND WHY THEY IMMIGRATED.

I am writing to voice my support for refugee children who are migrating to the U.S. to escape violence in Central America, and ask that as my representative you support programs that help these children, both in the U.S. and in Central America.

In recent years, many children and families have been fleeing some of the most violent countries in the world—El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. They are coming to the U.S. seeking refuge. Our country was a leader in the Refugee Convention; we signed treaties and passed laws that said that as a nation we vow to protect people fleeing persecution.

As such I would urge you to support:

* Precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at the border rather than barring all asylum cases under the pretense of controlling the spread of the pandemic. Children can easily be tested for COVID at the border, and Health and Human Services' immigration detention centers act as a de facto quarantine. The pandemic is not a sufficient reason to block endangered children from crossing the border.
* Releasing migrant children with sponsors while they await their court hearing instead of holding them for long periods in immigration jails. Under the Remain in Mexico policy, children fleeing for their lives face possible kidnapping or murder from the cartels that control these Mexican border cities. In one of the numerous [studies](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/detaining-families-a-study-of-asylum-adjudication-in-family-detention) on alternatives to detention, 96 percent of family asylum cases showed up for all their court hearings; it is the more effective and humane response.
* Removing the Third Country Asylum rule. When children are required to apply for asylum in another country before the U.S., we are asking them to apply for asylum in countries that are so dangerous their own citizens are fleeing these places in massive numbers. We must honor our promise to protect these children. We cannot put pressure on other countries to save asylum-seekers when we have resources to help them.
* Continued foreign aid to Central America that specifically funds violence prevention programs have shown promise in reducing homicides and the number of children who flee their home countries. The Trump Administration has drastically cut aid to all central American social programs. The only way to reduce immigration is to address the factors pushing people out of these countries. It is crucial to restore aid to these countries and to honest social organizations that establish programs that are proven to reduce violence and corruption. These programs are a lot cheaper than billions needed to deal with these children once they are on our doorstep.

Our government should treat children with kindness and decency because they are vulnerable children.

* Finally, we should provide refugee children with government lawyers if they cannot afford a lawyer. Our government provides accused murderers with public counsel if the accused cannot afford one, but immigrants, even immigrant children, get nothing. Most can’t afford a lawyer, and more than half are going to immigration court alone (even toddlers!) and expected to argue a complex immigration asylum case. The United Nations has estimated that 6 in 10 of these kids are fleeing violence in their home country and that they would likely merit international protection. But only 10 percent of them are getting that protection when they don’t have an attorney making their case; 70 percent win the right to stay legally in the U.S. if they have a lawyer. For many of these children, these court decisions have life or death consequences.

This treatment of children is not worthy of our court system, of our country.

Other actions we should take to help these children:

* We should stop paying Mexico tens of millions of dollars to intercept and deport these children before they reach our border. Mexican officials are deporting tens of thousands of children back south of their border each year because the U.S. is asking and paying them to.
* We should increase the number of refugees we allow to pre-9/11 levels -- 130,000, from the current 18,000—to allow more of these children to have a safe harbor here in the U.S.

Please stand up for unaccompanied immigrant children. Don’t just stand by.

If you have any questions, please contact me at TELEPHONE OR EMAIL.

Respectfully,

NAME

STREET ADDRESS

CITY, STATE ZIP CODE