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Dear Mr. Lara:

Thank you very much for writing me and sharing your views about the separation of migrant children from their parents at our southern border. I appreciate hearing from you on this important issue.

In May 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the “Zero Tolerance” policy, which allowed border officials to refer individual who crossed between ports of entry for criminal prosecution on the grounds of illegal entry. Consequently, any adult who was accompanied by a minor was separated from the child. For example, if a migrant parent with a child reached the border seeking asylum the parent was held in the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and separated from the child while awaiting criminal prosecution.

After the children were separated from their parents they were considered an ‘unaccompanied minor’ since they were without a parent and put under the responsibility of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The Trump administration’s removal of children from their parents is heartbreaking and inhumane.

On June 20, 2018 the Trump administration ended their family separation policy by signing an Executive Order (EO). The EO:

- instructs the Secretary of Homeland Security to maintain custody of families pending criminal or immigration proceedings;
- continues the ‘zero tolerance’ policy by prosecuting migrant parents apprehended between ports of entry;
- instructs the Secretary of Defense to construct facilities for detaining families; and
- instructs the Attorney General to seek modification of the *Flores* settlement agreement in court, this agreement currently governs and protects children in detention.

Unfortunately, the Executive Order does not address the cruelty surrounding family separation. This is why I co-sponsored [H.R. 2572 the Protect Family Values at the Border Act](#), a bill that will consider safety and family concerns in any prosecution of individuals

for immigration violations, including related training for the United States Customs and Border Protection; and [H.R. 6135 - Keep Families Together Act](#) a bill that prohibits Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials from separating children from their parents, except in extraordinary circumstances. It is important to remember that many of these migrant families are fleeing violent countries only to arrive and be separated. Rest assured, I will continue to work with my Congressional colleagues to ensure that family separation of migrant children is no longer an enforced policy in our country.

I would like to thank you again for contacting me. Please know that my staff and I will be monitoring this issue closely to take the necessary steps to make sure your voice is heard on this issue in Congress. Democracy works best when we stay in touch, so I hope you will continue to contact me about the issues that matter most to you. Please visit <http://grijalva.house.gov>, where you can sign-up for e-mail updates, send a message to me about current events or pending legislation, access my statements and press releases, request copies of legislation and government reports, and receive detailed information about the many services that I am privileged to provide for my constituents. I am honored to serve you, so please never hesitate to contact me in the future.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress