

Keep Families Together Act

In 2018, the Trump Administration announced a policy of family separations, beginning one of the darkest chapters of state-inflicted trauma in recent memory. The Trump Administration's deliberate policy decision resulted more than 5,000 children being separated from their parents.

The ACLU filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of separated families, *Ms. L v. U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement*, which ultimately resulted in a settlement agreement with the Biden Administration. Despite the Administration's Family Reunification Task Forces' efforts, 2,000 children still have not been reunited with their parents.

The *Keep Families Together Act*, led by Senator Laphonza Butler (D-CA) and Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI), was updated from the 116th Congress in consultation with ACLU litigators of the *Ms. L* settlement to preserve the agreement's protections and extend them in perpetuity.

The Keeping Families Together Act mandates the prioritization of family unity in immigration enforcement and provides guidelines to ensure that families are kept together throughout the legal process. It also explicitly prohibits the separation of children from their parents at the U.S. border, except in extraordinary circumstances.

- **Separated Families Procedure:** The bill mandates the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) create policies enabling parents and children to locate and reunite with each other if they have been separated. These procedures must be publicly accessible and available in an accessible language. In cases of separation, DHS is required to provide parents with a monthly report containing information about their child.
- **Consultation of Experts:** The bill mandates that DHS consult with immigrant advocacy organizations, child welfare organizations, and State child welfare agencies when developing procedures.
- **Reporting Requirements:** The bill requires an annual report to Congress describing each instance in which a child was separated from a parent or legal guardian.

Endorsements

Afghans for a Better Tomorrow, Al Otro Lado, Center for Gender and Refugee Studies (CGRS), Central American Resource Center (CARECEN-LA), Central American Resource Center of Northern California (CARECEN SF), Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative (CVIIC), Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), East Bay Refugee and Immigrant Forum, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, Human Rights First, Immigrant Defenders Law Center, Immigration Equality Fund, Immigration Institute of the Bay Area, Interfaith Refugee & Immigration Service (IRIS), Jesuit Refugee Service, Jewish Family and Children Services of Long Beach and Orange County, Jewish Family and Children Services of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties, Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Kino Border Initiative, La Raza Community Resource Center (SF), National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC), National United Church of Christ, Oasis Legal Services, Pacific Presbytery, Presbytery of San Gabriel, PC(USA), Santa Cruz Welcoming Network, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Union for Reform Judaism, Unidos.US, United We Dream, and Women's Refugee Commission (WRC).