July 18, 2019

Dear Texas State and Federal leaders,

As individuals and organizations dedicated to improving the lives of women and children in Texas, we are writing to express our deep concern over the reported treatment of parents and children held in immigration detention facilities on Texas soil.

We applaud recent legislation that provides significant humanitarian aid to improve the living conditions of child migrants in the care of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The money cannot come soon enough. Numerous accounts by Republican and Democratic elected officials, lawyers, health professionals, and Border Patrol agents indicate that many migrants are living in overcrowded conditions without access to sufficient food, clean water, clean clothing, bathing facilities or appropriate bedding and protection from the elements. Moreover, many migrants have not received needed medical or mental health treatment or have been separated from their families. For migrant children, many of whom are infants and toddlers, poor living conditions have impaired their physical and mental health. Several children have died while in federal detention facilities. Furthermore, early childhood trauma undermines a child’s healthy brain development and ability to form healthy attachments, resulting in lifelong, negative consequences, such as chronic physical and/or mental illness and less likelihood of succeeding in school or becoming productive workers.

We urge you to support additional measures to ensure that all children and parents who are in the care of the federal government, no matter their country of origin, receive compassionate, humane, and fair treatment. Migrant children who are in U.S. custody awaiting review of their asylum requests should reside in safe and clean environments with their parents, relatives or sponsors. During any brief stays in border or detention facilities, children should have access to sufficient food, clean water, beds, clean clothes, soap, and other necessities, in addition to recreation, health care and educational services.

It is critical that our federal and state leaders work expeditiously to ensure that all migrant children and families who are crossing our border for their safety and survival are treated with human dignity and care. We believe that you share our concern and will actively work to make this goal a reality.

Signed,

Stephanie Rubin  
CEO, Texans Care for Children

Sophie Phillips  
CEO, TexProtects

David C. Fleeger, MD  
President, Texas Medical Association

Ben G. Raimer, MD  
President, Texas Pediatric Society, The Texas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Rebecca Hart, MD  
President, Texas Academy of Family Physicians
G. Sealy Massingill, MD  
President, Texas Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

C. Tony Dunn, MD  
Chair, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Dist. XI

Steve McKee, MSSW  
Executive Director, Texas Physicians for Social Responsibility

Patrick Bresette  
Executive Director, Children's Defense Fund-Texas

Jessica Trudeau  
Executive Director, Momentous Institute

Kim Kofron  
Executive Director, Texas Association for the Education of Young Children

Ann Beeson  
CEO, Center for Public Policy Priorities

Sadie Funk  
CEO, First 3 Years

Jolene Sanders  
Advocacy Manager, Easterseals Texas

Deborah Fowler  
Executive Director, Texas Appleseed

Greg Hansch  
Executive Director, NAMI Texas

Miriam Nisenbaum  
Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers-Texas

Dr. Robert Sanborn  
President and CEO, Children at Risk

Dustin Rynders  
Supervising Attorney, Disability Rights Texas

Chris Masey  
Executive Director, Autism Society of Texas

Dottie Smith, President  
The Commit Partnership

David C. Smith  
CEO, United Way for Greater Austin

Rev. Charles Foster Johnson  
Executive Director, Pastors for Texas Children
Bee Moorhead  
Executive Director, Texas Impact

Lenna Baxter  
Co-Chair, Interfaith Welcome Coalition

Molly Clayton  
Executive Director, Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Veronda Durden  
President and CEO, Any Baby Can

Kathleen A. Fletcher, Ph.D, MPH  
President/CEO, Voices for Children of San Antonio

Kelly White and Julia Spann  
Co-CEOs, The SAFE Alliance

Sarah R. Guidry  
Executive Director, Earl Carl Institute for Legal and Social Justice

Maria P. Hernandez  
Executive Director & Founder, VELA

Audrey Deckinga  
Partner, The Deckinga Group, LLC

Melanie Rubin  
Director, Dallas Early Education Alliance

Vickie Allen  
Executive Director, Educational First Steps

Terry N. Ford  
Executive Director, Lumin Education

Raymond Raney  
Canon to the Ordinary, Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande

Judy Lugo  
President, Texas State Employees Union CWA 6186