



## **Statement by the Western Center on Law and Poverty on the President's Policy of Separating Immigrant Children from their Parents**

The Western Center on Law and Poverty calls on President Trump to immediately cease separating immigrant children from their parents when they are crossing the border. Despite the President's claims, he created this crisis and it is he who has the unilateral legal power to end it. The President must act now to end the harm he and his Administration are causing.

The President's actions demonstrate a callous disregard for the well-being of the children that is indefensible. Childhood trauma has startling long-term impacts on brain development and well-being, as voluminous research shows. When a child lives in abject poverty, in housing not fit for human habitation, when they go hungry or become homeless, when they are forced to endure severe trauma, we know that children suffer. They suffer not just in the moment but, in many cases, for the rest of their lives. That is why California leaders have made reducing poverty a major priority in every budget since 2013. While our state can't eliminate all material hardship we can acknowledge that it exists and do our best to prevent it.

When our President deliberately inflicts harm on children by separating them from their parents and depriving them of their freedom, we have crossed a line that should never be crossed. No matter whether you view undocumented asylum seekers as brave parents seeking a better life or you support limits on immigration, we all share one value. Our children come first. The thought that our President is inflicting intentional emotional distress on children should unite all Americans to say NO!

Western Center believes that all human beings have a right to happiness, safety, and dignity. The President is using his executive powers to deprive people of those basic rights. He is using his power to terrorize children and their parents for pursuing their safety. The President's actions are undignified for an American President and a permanent stain on the nation's history. Western Center calls for all removed children to be immediately reunited with their families and that the families be provided all necessary services to recover from this gross violation of human rights.