



## SAMPLE LETTER TO CONGRESS

Dear Senator/ Representative \_\_\_\_\_,

As an Episcopalian and your constituent, I urge you to reject changes to the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2008 and other policies that would remove lifesaving protections and services from vulnerable unaccompanied children.

An immediate response to this crisis is needed, but removing key protections from bipartisan legislation, especially at a time when more children are in need of these life-saving protections, is the wrong response. Legislative proposals such as the HUMANE Act (Helping Unaccompanied Minors and Alleviating National Emergency) do not offer appropriate humanitarian solutions to this crisis and do not address the systemic violence and instability that continues to force children to flee for their lives.

When Congress resumes in September, I urge you to support legislation that will:

1. Ensure that the well-being of vulnerable children is the driving force behind our policy response. Children should not be treated as an enforcement priority but should have access to child welfare personnel, legal counsel, and the services they need to navigate the immigration system. The TVPRA and other laws governing the protection and care for these children should not be changed and increases to family detention should be opposed.
2. Provide vital funding for refugee services in FY14 and FY15. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within Health and Human Services is the office that provides lifesaving support services to resettled refugees, asylees, Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa recipients, Cuban and Haitian entrants, and survivors of human trafficking and torture. ORR is also responsible for providing care for unaccompanied immigrant children, and earlier this summer \$94 million was reprogrammed away from



JUSTICE *and* ADVOCACY MINISTRIES

- services to refugees in order to care for rising numbers of unaccompanied children. ORR needs at least \$1.2 billion in additional funding in 2014 to care for vulnerable children and replenish reprogrammed funds. The U.S. must show leadership by protecting unaccompanied children while maintaining our commitment to refugee resettlement and serving all of the populations within ORR's mandate equally by providing additional funding in FY14 and robust funding in FY15.
3. Avoid conflating the need for emergency funding with sweeping policy decisions. The violence in Central America that has displaced millions and forced tens of thousands of children to flee is an emergency situation that requires an emergency response. Restricting access to protection for asylum seekers and reducing due process for children, however, signify a significant and weighty change in U.S. humanitarian policy and law. Changes of this magnitude must be considered carefully and deliberately, without being tied to vital funding.

The United States is capable of meeting this challenge with compassion and Episcopalians stand ready to work with Congress and the Administration in the implementation of humanitarian solutions to this crisis.

Thank you for your public service.

Regards,