

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Justice in Motion denounces the Trump administration's attack on migrant children, warns of increased risk to kids' safety

Denying unaccompanied children the right to counsel is morally reprehensible and puts innocent children at risk of trafficking.

NEW YORK — On Friday, the [Trump administration cancelled a program](#) to provide legal representation for children who enter the U.S. unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. Justice in Motion Executive Director Cathleen Caron issued the following statement in opposition to the administration's action and calling for restored funding:

“Justice in Motion denounces the Trump administration's decision to eliminate critical legal services for unaccompanied minors. This is a devastating blow to migrant children who are seeking protection in the U.S. and undermines the fundamental rights of these vulnerable children.

“Unaccompanied minors are among the most at-risk populations, fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries. They arrive at our borders seeking safety. The administration's cuts mean that children, some as young as toddlers, will have to represent themselves before an immigration judge and against a government attorney. This is not only unjust but also places these children in an incredibly precarious position, jeopardizing their ability to present their cases effectively and potentially leading to unjust deportations that further endanger them.

“Over the last decade, Justice in Motion has proudly provided critical support to dozens of legal services organizations that have served hundreds of immigrant children. We are keenly aware of the critical need for lawyers in these cases, as legal representation is essential for children to win relief and secure their futures.

“Moreover, Congress has already appropriated funds for the Unaccompanied Children Program in compliance with the bipartisan William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPRA), which sets forth crucial procedures to protect unaccompanied children from trafficking and abuse as they navigate the immigration system. The elimination of legal services directly contradicts these well-established protections and undermines the intent of the bipartisan law.

“Protecting children from trafficking and abuse should be a goal shared by everyone — and most certainly is a moral obligation our country must fulfill. We call on the Trump administration to reverse this harmful decision and to prioritize the well-being and rights of unaccompanied

minors. It is imperative that we provide these children with the support and legal assistance they need to ensure their safety and to uphold the values of justice and humanity.”

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Justice in Motion protects migrant rights by ensuring justice across borders. Our unique network of on-the-ground human rights defenders in Mexico and Central America partner with U.S. advocates to make sure that wherever migrants go, their rights will follow.