DATE

Dear SENATOR’S NAME,

INCLUDE A BRIEF PARAGRAPH ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY HISTORY. YOU MIGHT MENTION WHERE YOUR PARENTS/GRANDPARENTS CAME FROM AND WHY THEY IMMIGRATED.

I was heartened that President Obama announced in November a measure that would mean fewer citizen children will be separated from their undocumented parents.

But I am writing to oppose some of the measures this administration and congress have taken regarding unaccompanied immigrant children. The Administration has pushed to undo the law (Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act Of 2008,) that requires unaccompanied immigrant children to get a full hearing before an immigration judge. When that didn’t work, President Obama ordered immigration courts to ram cases through as quickly as possible. Some judges are giving kids one week to present a fully developed asylum case, something impossible to do in less than year.

This has got to stop.

Our government provides accused murderers with public counsel if the accused cannot afford one, but immigrants, even immigrant children get nothing. Most can’t afford a lawyer, and 70% are going to court alone (even toddlers!) and expected to argue a complex immigration asylum case. The United Nations has estimated that 6 in 10 of these kids are fleeing violence in their home country and that they would likely merit international protection. But only 10 percent of them are getting that protection when they don’t have an attorney making their case; 70 percent get it if they have a lawyer. For many of these children, these court decisions have life or death consequences.

This treatment of children is not worthy of our court system, of our country.

Our government should provide every one of these children with government-funded attorneys.

Other actions we should take to help these children:

* We should stop paying Mexico tens of million of dollars to intercept and deport these children before they reach our border. Mexican officials deported nearly 20,000 unaccompanied immigrant children back south of their border last year, four times the number a few years ago. They are doing this because the U.S. is asking and paying them to.
* We should increase the number of refugees we allow to pre-9/11 levels -- 130,000, from the current 70,000 -- to allow more of these children to have a safe harbor here in the U.S.
* We should provide more aid to Central America to help reduce the causes of the violence pushing these children out. Vice President Joe Biden proposed $1 billion in aid to Central America for fiscal 2016, a tripling of current levels. Our government should bring everything we have at our disposal (microloans to women, trade policies that help these countries, give preference to goods from there, policies that promote education for girls, promote democratic governments that reduce corruption) to support this region.

Please stand up for unaccompanied immigrant children. Don’t just stand by.

If you have any questions, please contact me at TELEPHONE NUMBER OR EMAIL.

Respectfully,

NAME

STREET ADDRESS

CITY, STATE ZIP CODE