Since April, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has separated children and families when crossing the U.S. border. These detentions are cruel, immoral, and dangerous; they remove children from their first line of protection—their parents. Separating children from their parents is wrong and a violation of basic human rights.

On behalf of the leadership and membership of the Association of Children's Museums, we must express our outrage at the separation of children from their families. Yesterday, President Trump signed an executive order ending this policy, and we urge the administration to quickly reunite separated families. We remain concerned for the well-being of the children in their care. We are enraged by the administration's willingness to put children in harm's way for political purposes.

Science has proven the medical consequences of toxic stress on children. Through these forced separations and inhumane treatment of these children while in custody, the United States is inflicting lifelong harm on innocent children brought to the United States by their parents. As described by the American Academy of Pediatrics, "Highly stressful experiences, including family separation, can cause irreparable harm to lifelong development by disrupting a child's brain architecture. Toxic stress, which is caused by prolonged exposure to heightened stress, has detrimental short- and long-term health effects. ... [Toxic stress] can contribute to chronic conditions like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and heart disease."

Children's museums believe that all children are valued citizens and as a community, we share the vision of a world that honors all children and respects the diverse ways in which they learn and develop. As a sector of the museum field created in America more than a century ago, and one that's inspired new movements in the cultural sector worldwide in serving children and families, our field has a special role in supporting all children and demonstrating their value to their communities. In the most trying circumstances, children's museums support and advocate for children and families in their communities.

The Association will continue to advocate on behalf of children and families. We also will continue to lift up examples of children's museums' efforts to support immigrant families, such as the Children's Museum of Brownsville's (TX) experiences with unaccompanied children living in immigrant detention centers. We urge all children's museums to contact their federal legislators to demand action that will quickly reunite separated children with their families as well as continue to share our field's vision of a world that honors and respects all children.

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