



SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER
Rise Up AND Act for Justice

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Unaccompanied Migrant Children Left Vulnerable to Exploitation While in the Government's Care

**Statement by Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd**

(Silver Spring, MD) – We urge Congress to take action to reverse the Administration's distressing March 21 decision to strip critical legal services away from unaccompanied migrant children, ending vital legal aid programs and leaving the children vulnerable to trafficking, exploitation and other harms.

The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd calls on the House of Representatives and Senate to work together and across the aisle to ensure robust funding in the FY 2026 federal appropriations package for the Office of Refugee Resettlement to completely restore legal services for unaccompanied children, including full legal representation.

We know the Administration is deeply concerned about human trafficking and yet this decision runs counter to its commitment to ending this scourge, as unaccompanied minors are particularly prone to such exploitation. Survivors of child trafficking with whom NAC has worked have spoken passionately about the critical role their lawyers played in their pursuit of justice and healing. Legal representatives have the time and opportunity to screen their young clients for past or potential harms, and to get them the protections and help they need.

The William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2008 mandates that unaccompanied immigrant children in the custody of the Department of Homeland Security or the Department of Health and Human Services have access to legal counsel and child advocates, ensuring their best interests are protected throughout the immigration process. It also requires that HHS ensures "to the greatest extent practicable" that unaccompanied children have access to pro bono legal counsel.

This law passed not so long ago with strong bipartisan support because it promoted both the protection of these children and the efficient functioning of an immigration system by ensuring legal counsel for unaccompanied children who otherwise would have to move through a complex system all alone.

Congress can and should reverse the Administration's ill-advised directive and affirm the TVPRA law and the rights of children. Congress should embrace its power of the purse and act for the sake of the children.

The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd stands with children – especially the most marginalized. Let us do all we can to ensure the safety of these children who are alone in our country. They are here on our watch, so this is ours to do.

[The National Advocacy Center](#) educates and advocates on social justice issues for the transformation of society to the benefit of all people reflecting the spirituality, history and mission of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. NAC advocates at the Federal level for people living in poverty, immigrants, survivors of human trafficking, survivors of domestic abuse, and other vulnerable populations.

The National Advocacy Center reflects the spirituality, history and mission of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd (better known as the Sisters of the Good Shepherd). The sisters and their agencies work in solidarity with the disenfranchised – particularly families, women and children – who often are forgotten, left-behind or dismissed.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd was founded in France in 1835 and is in 70 countries on 5 continents and has had a presence in the United States for over 175 years. With a presence in 22 states and 1 U. S. Territory, the Sisters and their Lay Mission Partners have dedicated themselves to serving girls, women and families who experience poverty, exploitation, vulnerability and marginalization.