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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3603

June 19, 2018

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Attorney General Sessions, Secretary Nielsen and Secretary Azar:

It is with growing concern that I read and see news reports of children being separated from their parents after they have illegally crossed our border. I appreciate your efforts to secure our borders and hold those accountable who break our laws, but it is not without a heavy heart when mothers and fathers are separated from their young kids.

As agency heads, you are entrusted with the enforcement of our laws and court decisions. In the past, it was not contemplated that we would be faced with the thousands of families showing up at our borders that we are seeing now. Thus, we have the unintended consequence of families being separated when our immigration laws are finally being enforced after a long period of leniency. Human smugglers and traffickers have taken advantage of that leniency resulting in the current crisis.

Despite all of this, I do not believe the answer is to create more pain for families that have already endured a long and dangerous journey to our border. I ask each of you and your agencies to use your existing authorities to find a way to provide for the detention of families as a unit and to expedite the processing of their cases to ensure their proceedings are adjudicated as quickly as possible before having to be separated according to current law.

In the meantime, I will be working with my colleagues to find a permanent solution to this crisis and ask for your agencies to work with Congress as we consider legislation addressing this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James M. Inhofe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" being the most prominent.

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator