



Legislation Text

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File #: 2018-0285, Version: 1

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Clerk 06/14/2018

A MOTION opposing the United States Attorney General's immigration policy that is separating families crossing the United States border.

WHEREAS, On May 7, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Session announced that the Trump administration would greatly expand the practice of separating families who cross the United States-Mexico border illegally, and

WHEREAS, according to Reuters, the Department of Homeland Security has stated that the policy of separating families is intended to discourage people from attempting to cross the border, and

WHEREAS, in recent testimony before Congress, the United States Department of Homeland Security reported that 658 children were taken from their parents in just 13 days in May, and

WHEREAS, according to the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project ("NWIRP"), as of June 7, 2018, up to 120 women who crossed the southwest United States border seeking asylum are detained at the Federal Detention Center in SeaTac, and

WHEREAS, many of those women were separated from their children shortly after being taken into custody and their children are being held at other government facilities, and

WHEREAS, the women NWIRP spoke with were charged with misdemeanors and sentenced to time served, but continue to be held in the federal detention center and have not been allowed to reunite with their children as their asylum claims are processed, and

WHEREAS, NWIRP reports that federal agents have refused to tell the mothers where their children are, and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Times reports that Immigration Customs Enforcement has been placing children separated from their parents in facilities and foster homes across the country and, according to the Washington State Attorney General's office, the state has located at least six children within Washington whose parents are being held in federal detention, and

WHEREAS, the Seattle office of Kids in Need of Defense stated that the organization has seen eight children, ranging in age from 12 to 17, being housed at facilities in King and Pierce counties for children in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, and

WHEREAS, reports from organizations providing care for these children have reported signs of "separation trauma," such as inability to sleep, nightmares, crying and begging for their parents, or physical pain, and

WHEREAS, families should be kept together for the health and well-being of both children and parents and the American Academy of Pediatrics has emphasized separating children from their parents can cause irreparable harm, and

WHEREAS, federal laws and international treaties allow people to obtain asylum if they have a legitimate fear of persecution at home and, according to NWIRP, the women they contacted who are being held in SeaTac have expressed fear of returning to their home countries, and

WHEREAS, on June 7, 2018, the United States House of Representatives introduced House Resolution 927 to condemn the policy of separating children from their parents at the border, and

WHEREAS, on June 7, 2018, the United States Senate introduced the Keep Families Together Act, S.3036, which would keep immigrant families together by preventing the Department of Homeland Security from taking children from their parents at the border, and

WHEREAS, on February 28, 2018, the United States Senate also introduced the Fair Day in Court for Kids Act, S.2468, which would provide access to counsel for unaccompanied immigrant children and youth, and

WHEREAS, the 2018 King County federal legislative agenda urged congress to: "Address immigration reform in a comprehensive manner that protects the legal status of DACA recipients, ensures that all residents feel secure to call on our public safety officers for help, and keeps King County a welcoming place for all," and

WHEREAS, on June 9, 2018, King County Executive Dow Constantine stated that he will be working with King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg to block charter planes carrying asylum-seekers bound for the detention center from using King County International Airport;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

The council:

- A. Opposes the Trump administration's policy of separating families at the United States border;
- B. Recognizes that separating children from their parents may inflict irreversible damage to the health of the children that could have a lifetime of consequences;
- C. Calls on the county's federal delegation to add pressure on the Trump Administration to immediately release all of the immigrants to be reunited with their children and give them access to attorneys to quickly process their asylum claims.
- D. Supports the United States Senate introduced Keep Families Together Act, S.3036, and Fair Day in Court for Kids Act, S.2468, and calls on the state's federal delegation to also support the bills; and
- E. Supports the appropriate use of county resources and authority to limit assistance provided and to pressure the Trump administration to stop the practice of separating children from their families at the border.