

June 20, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

I write to oppose in the strongest terms the policy of separating immigrant children from their parents when families are arrested at the border, and urge your administration to immediately stop the practice. My organization represents nearly 1,800 college and university presidents from all types of institutions, two-year and four-year, public and private.

The academic research is quite clear about the profound, long-term damage that often occurs as a result of wrenching children away from their parents and other family members.

As Ana Mari Cauce, president of the University of Washington and a child psychologist, said:

“There are enduring and often lifelong health and mental health consequences of traumatic parent-child separation, both for parent and child. The damage for children is especially acute and can interfere not only with mental health and emotional development, but with brain development itself.”

There also have been faith-based appeals, such as the statement issued by the Rev. John I. Jenkins, president of the University of Notre Dame:

“Central to the Holy Cross education Notre Dame offers is a sense of family, centered on the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and in that spirit I call on the administration to end immediately the cruel practice of separating children from parents and parents from children.”

In addition to these university leaders, numerous academics, scholarly associations, and higher education leaders have spoken out on this issue.

I understand and fully support your agency's charge to protect our borders. But inflicting emotional and psychological abuse on children should not—must not—be a part of carrying out that mission.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ted Mitchell
President