

June 21, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

The undersigned child advocacy organizations write to thank you for the work you have done to advance children's best interests within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), including facilitating the reunification of children forcibly separated from parents under the previous Administration, and to applaud President Biden for recently signing into law H.R. 4426, "[Homeland Security for Children Act](#)." We believe there is much more DHS can do to prioritize children in its policies and urge you to swiftly act to implement this bill by adopting child impact statements for department policies and designating high-level leadership on children's issues within the agency.

Every issue is a kids' issue, and homeland security is no exception. DHS has authorization over a wide range of issues, from disaster management to immigration to terrorism. All these issues impact children. Children are [disproportionately impacted](#) by natural disasters, whether they face physical injury, are cut off from food or medical care, face school disruption, or experience declines in mental health. In immigration, children and families make up a [larger share](#) of those arriving at our border seeking protection and the agency's enforcement policies have [consequences for children in immigrant families](#). Children are also impacted by terrorist attacks—for example, after the September 11 attacks, [35 percent](#) of parents reported that their children had at least one stress symptom, and almost half reported that their children were worried about their safety or the safety of their family. The global phenomena of [increased natural disasters and forced migration](#), as well as recent domestic terrorism attacks in the United States, make this bill's enactment particularly timely.

The Homeland Security for Children Act requires each DHS office and component to take the needs of children into account in mission planning and execution, particularly for children in underserved communities. It also directs the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to integrate the needs of children in disaster planning, including by appointing a technical expert to coordinate such integration. To effectively fulfill the agency's new mandate to take children's needs into account across all components, we urge that DHS adopt the use of [child impact statements](#).

Similar to analyses the federal government currently uses, child impact statements are a tool to systematically ask fundamental questions about a policy, program, or activity's outcome on children's best interests. Using child impact statements, DHS can put in place an intentional and systematic structure to place children's rights, views, and needs in the foreground of its policies and plans. Additionally, child impact statements advance both the bill's mandate and the Administration's [whole-of-government approach](#) to advance equity and support underserved communities. Children are now the nation's [most diverse generation](#) and a dedicated process to evaluate policies' impact on children will illuminate disproportionate negative impacts or additional steps needed to equitably advance the needs of children from marginalized communities, including Black, Brown, and Indigenous children, children with disabilities, children of immigrants, and LGBTQ youth.

We also urge you to appoint a coordinator on children's issues within your office, as well as within FEMA. This will promote coordination across DHS to prioritize children and also facilitate DHS's coordination with other agencies to address the holistic and intersectional needs of children.

Thank you for your ongoing work to prioritize children. We are excited for this opportunity for DHS to lead by example and prioritize children through the use of child impact statements and high-level leadership for children within the agency. We look forward to working with you and being part of regular stakeholder meetings to support the agency's consideration of children's best interests, in line with the consultation provisions of the bill.

Sincerely,

Center for Law and Social Policy  
ChildFund  
Child Labor Coalition  
Church World Service  
Comic Relief US  
CREA  
Fair Start Movement  
First Focus on Children  
FLAP-Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project  
iFoster  
Justice for Migrant Women  
Juvenile Law Center

Kids Impact Initiative  
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)  
MCCOY (Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc.)  
Media Voices for Children  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Consumers League  
National Migrant Seasonal Head Start Association  
Phoenix Zones Initiatives  
Population Balance  
Save the Children  
Sycamores  
Texas Kids Can't Wait  
The Children's Partnership  
UNICEF USA  
Voices for Utah Children  
Voices for Vermont's Children  
Witness at the Border  
ZERO TO THREE