



January 22, 2024

The Honorable Josh Shapiro, Governor of Pennsylvania  
The Honorable Cherelle Parker, Mayor of Philadelphia  
Andrea Tuominen, Court Administrator, AOPC

Dear Governor Shapiro, Mayor Parker, and Ms. Tuominen:

When President Trump takes office in January, he has vowed to implement a sweeping deportation campaign that is likely to have dire consequences for children. [President-elect Trump claims that the 2016-2020 deportation measures were just a dress rehearsal what can be expected to commence in January 2025.](#)

National data suggests that as many as five million children are at risk of being separated from their parents if the President-elect follows through on his campaign proposals. We are appalled that to enforce compliance with immigration rules, some children will become orphans or will have no choice but to live with strangers with little ability to be in contact with their parents.

By way of background, **Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in PA made 16,000 arrests during Trump's first term. A third of those arrested had children and the arrests resulted in many children losing one or both parents to the deportation system.** This data, compiled by the ACLU, provides compelling evidence that thousands of Pennsylvania children may be at risk of the extraordinary childhood trauma of being separated from their parents in the near term because of the promised deportation campaign.

The President-elect has been explicit that even legal residents with temporary status from other countries are at risk of deportation, as well as those living in the U.S. without legal immigration status. For that reason, many parents from Latin America, Caribbean and African nations are justifiably scared that they will be ensnared in the Trump Administration's indiscriminate deportation campaign.

The chilling effect of this campaign is already being felt by immigrant parents who are frightened to go to medical appointments, court hearings, or work. While it's clear that you have no control over the actions taken by the Federal government, I urge you to begin planning in earnest to adjust the routine operations of government agencies, courts and medical systems so that children are protected, as much as possible, from experiencing the horrors of their own deportation and/or the anguish of being separated from their parents.

To protect public health during COVID, all levels of government, health systems, and courts accelerated the use of virtual technology to enable residents to meet their obligations and needs. I firmly believe that the potential separation of thousands of children from their parents is a public health emergency that can be mitigated, to some extent, by intentionally re-establishing virtual options for health and other necessary appointments and for court hearings as well.

Further, I urge you to publicly remind staff employed by the state, or the city, state or local judicial offices, public education, child care, health care or other direct service organizations that they are not required, nor expected, to ask parents for citizenship documents to access services unless there is an affirmative federal requirement in place, or imposed upon them, to do so.

I appreciate your understanding that it's the role of government to do all it can to promote the mental well-being of every child. I urge you to identify every option to ensure this is the case as the immigration enforcement policies of the new federal administration unfold.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donna Cooper', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Donna Cooper  
Executive Director