

June 18, 2019

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Chairman
House Judiciary Committee
2132 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Doug Collins
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee
1504 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
House Homeland Security Committee
2466 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member
House Homeland Security Committee
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As medical and mental health providers for women, children, and adolescents, we write to support H.R. 3239, the *Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in Customs and Border Protection Custody Act* and urge you to advance this legislation as part of any humanitarian response to the situation at the southern border. Our organizations believe that conditions in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody are inconsistent with evidence-based recommendations for appropriate care and treatment of children and pregnant women. H.R. 3239 is a necessary first step to ensuring adequate minimum standards for health care, water and nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, and shelter.

In December of 2018 after the death of Jakelin Caal Maquin in CBP custody, our organizations wrote the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Commissioner of CBP urging the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to implement specific meaningful steps to ensure that all children and pregnant women in CBP custody receive appropriate medical and mental health screening and necessary follow-up care by qualified health care professionals trained for this purpose. Many of our organizations have sought to provide expert advice to the federal government about how to best care for and treat immigrant children and pregnant women in custody, and yet at least six children have died in federal custody.

H.R. 3239 takes important steps toward ensuring that appropriate medical and mental health screening and care is provided to all individuals including immigrant children and pregnant women in CBP custody. As experts in medical and mental health care, we know the importance of timely, appropriate medical and mental health screening and care and the difference it can make, especially when it comes to vulnerable populations such as pregnant women and children.

Conditions in CBP facilities, which include open toilets, constant light exposure, insufficient food and water, no bathing facilities, extremely cold temperatures, and forcing pregnant women and children to sleep on cement floors, are traumatizing. Such facilities are simply not appropriate places for children or for pregnant women. Passage of H.R. 3239 is essential to providing an effective humanitarian response.

We urge you to move quickly on this legislation and look forward to working with you to ensure that individuals, especially children and pregnant women, in CBP custody receive necessary medical and mental health screening and follow-up care.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Physicians
American Medical Association
American Pediatric Society
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
Pediatric Policy Council
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research