



**JAMES L. MADARA, MD**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

ama-assn.org  
t (312) 464-5000

June 19, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Jefferson B. Sessions, III  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Alex M. Azar, II  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Nielsen, Secretary Azar, and Attorney General Sessions:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to strongly urge the federal government to withdraw its “zero tolerance” policy that requires the separation of migrating children from their parents or caregivers. Instead, we urge the Administration to give priority to supporting families and protecting the health and well-being of the children within those families.

The Administration’s “zero tolerance” policy was a topic recently discussed at the AMA’s Annual Meeting, which includes delegates representing over 170 state and national medical specialty societies. During this meeting we heard from delegates that the Administration’s policy will do great harm to children and their parents or caregivers, who felt compelled to make a dangerous and uncertain journey because of safety concerns in their own countries. Families seeking refuge in the U.S. already endure emotional and physical stress, which is only exacerbated when they are separated from one another. It is well known that childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences created by inhumane treatment often create negative health impacts that can last an individual’s entire lifespan. Therefore, the AMA believes strongly that, in the absence of immediate physical or emotional threats to the child’s well-being, migrating children should not be separated from their parents or caregivers.

We urge you to take prompt action on this matter.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Office of Refugee Resettlement, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services