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## PRESS RELEASE

### ***Best for Children Solutions for Migrant Crisis***

*July 2, 2018, Gainesville, FL from Joseph Zanga, MD, FCP\**

Children and their parents should be inseparable. On this principle, both the American College of Pediatricians (ACPed) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) agree. The ACPeds holds the FAMILY as central to children's well-being. The AAP is generally softer in this regard. Consequently, during this present, highly publicized debate about what is occurring on the US Southwestern border we must ask the AAP, why only in this setting and why now are you so loudly trumpeting this principle?

I have worked for 40 years to promote activities designed to prevent Child Abuse and Neglect, to diagnose and treat child victims, and, if at all possible, bring the family together. Currently I also work to end human trafficking in my community, especially Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST). Both organizations noted above are supportive of these efforts. I see daily in my activities, children separated from their parents because the parents are using or dealing in drugs. Should we incarcerate the children with them? A father is abusing his child and we remove from the home, not the father, but rather the child.

Both separation actions are part of current law or regulation. How often is the AAP quoted in the media about changing laws to prevent the former or even simply promoting a child centered approach to the latter. Nowhere near as often as their outraged media protestations about the separation of illegal immigrant adults from the children who accompany them. And now they even oppose housing them together in Family Residential Centers.

And at the Border I must ask, Why Now? Surely it is clear that this is not a new problem. Even in the previous, and presumably sympathetic, President's time in office, children and their parents were housed separately, often a continent apart. I hesitate, but must ask, is it the Children who are the AAP's concern or the current President? Surely these children should have been a concern eight or more years ago. Of course, children belong with their legal parents but not in a jail with them now or years before.

The AAP had a saying two decades or so ago - *Solutions Before Problems*. If there ever was a festering problem to which this saying applies, this is surely it. Yet no solution has been proposed by them even when asked to do so. The AAP is a large organization with millions of dollars in reserve. Why has there been no offer to bring their collective creativity and financial resources to bear on this concern?

We have been and still are a nation of immigrants, over 47 million of them and counting. We admit on average 1.5 million legal immigrants each year. In addition, in 2010, 3.8% of the US population was here illegally as compared to 1.3% of the population of the 13 other major industrialized nations of the world. Our past President and his Congress had 8 years to legally solve this problem. Why now must it be solved in 30 days?

Below are suggestions that I, as a past President of ACPeds, ask the current Administration to support:

1. Enact solutions at the source. Help the countries of origin of these would be immigrants to improve conditions so that leaving their ancestral home would not be the first choice.
2. Empower and staff our embassies/consulates in these countries to vet the potential immigrants, especially asylum seekers, assuring that the adults were truly parents to the children, truly endangered, and ultimately capable of supporting and caring for them after entry to the US. That might save some (children particularly) the *toxic stress* of the long and dangerous journey
3. Create additional Family Residential Centers such as the one in Dilley, Texas, which opened in 2014.

As ardent supporters of the [FAMILY](#), ACPeds wants this problem solved and stands ready to lobby for rational, legal, solutions to keep children with their parents here, or in their own country. Finally, let's recall the story of the children in the river, rushed by the current toward the falls. People on shore form a human chain to rescue them but one leaves the chain saying he's going upstream to stop whoever is throwing the children in. Given the opportunity we, the ACPeds, will be that person on this issue.

*Joseph Zanga, MD, FCP is one of the founding members and a past president of the American College of Pediatricians. Dr. Zanga drafted this statement on behalf of the ACPeds in response to queries from media, members and non-members which followed the AAP's public comments on the treatment of migrant children.*

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*The American College of Pediatricians is a national medical association of licensed physicians and healthcare professionals who specialize in the care of infants, children, and adolescents. The mission of the College is to enable all children to reach their optimal physical and emotional health and well-being.*