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For Immediate Release

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**National Association of Counsel for Children Urges Trump Administration to Restore Legal Counsel for Unaccompanied Children**

*Stop work order leaves thousands of immigrant children without legal representation or guidance, threatening rights, safety, and due process.*

DENVER, CO. – This week, the Trump administration ordered nonprofit legal advocacy organizations that receive federal funding to represent unaccompanied migrant children to stop working. The National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) urges the administration to reconsider its decision, which could leave roughly 26,000 of children without legal representation, without access to essential services, and at greater risk of trafficking, child labor, and neglect.

“For decades there has been bipartisan agreement that lawyers play an essential role in keeping vulnerable children safe,” said Kim Dvorchak, CEO of NACC. “NACC calls on Congress, the administration, and the US Department of Health and Human Services to work to restore this funding immediately, so that children do not lose access to the legal status that Congress specifically designed for their relief.”

“Children should never face the court system without an attorney. This is true for child welfare cases, youth justice cases, and most certainly for federal immigration matters,” said Allison Green, Legal Director of NACC. “As lawyers, we have a special responsibility to speak against the deprivation of due process protections for children,” she added, citing the [American Bar Association rules of professional conduct](#).

[NACC’s longstanding position](#) is that young people subject to federal immigration systems must have guaranteed access to legal counsel. Lawyers help children navigate this complicated system, determine their eligibility for asylum or resident status, connect with family, and ensure due process under the law. NACC is particularly concerned about potential abuse in federal facilities, exploitation, and the increased odds that courts will make uninformed decisions without the evidence and insight counsel provide.

The stop work order also threatens to create chaos and uncertainty in organizations that contracted with the federal government to provide legal representation to immigrant children, and the immigration courts where they practice. Even without federal funding, attorneys have an ethical obligation to not abandon their clients, and must continue on current cases without pay, which is unsustainable. This could lead to backlogs in cases, confusion for judges, inconsistency in representation, and other procedural challenges. NACC stands in solidarity with advocates doing this vital work.

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Founded in 1977, the National Association of Counsel for Children is a non-profit professional membership and advocacy organization dedicated to advancing justice for children, youth, and families. NACC provides programs, training, certification, and resources that improve the quality of legal representation for children, parents, and agencies; supports a community of dedicated professionals and helps attract and retain diverse talent in the children's legal advocacy profession; and advocates for policies that advance children's rights, including the right to counsel. <https://www.naccchildlaw.org/>