



## **MITESOL and MABE Statement Opposing U.S. Administration Policies Separating Immigrant Children from their Families**

Michigan Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (MITESOL) and Michigan Association for Bilingual Education (MABE) strongly urge Congress and the current administration to promptly reunite children who have been separated from their parents at the border and to pass humane immigration legislation that comprehensively addresses the educational, emotional and physical needs of these children.

MITESOL is an affiliate organization of TESOL International that provides support for professionals involved in teaching English to speakers of other languages, and MABE encourages and promotes multilingual education in the State of Michigan. MITESOL and MABE are educational institutions that cultivate respect for diversity, multilingualism, and multiculturalism. As organizations that support a large population of teachers and students who are immigrants, MITESOL and MABE oppose the maltreatment of families seeking refuge in our country.

We believe it is our obligation to care for and protect children, regardless of their national origin. Detaining children without their parents in prison-like environments is harmful to their mental, emotional and physical health and well-being, and will be a detriment to their ability to thrive and perform at high levels in the classroom. The long-lasting damages these children face as a result of their separation from their parents will not only affect their learning of language and content in schools, but will also likely require expanded services from health and mental health professionals as they grow and develop into productive members of society. In addition, the costs associated with these children's education will be significantly increased due to the added stressors of migration, separation from their families, and involuntary seclusion and detention.

It is the right of these children and their families seeking asylum to be treated with dignity. The separation of families for purposes of immigration enforcement, management, or detention is never in the best interest or well-being of children. It is important to note that many of these immigrant families are not violating any laws. In fact, they are seeking asylum in accordance with international law. Children should not be used as a deterrent to enter the United States. This country has a history of being a beacon of hope for many families escaping war and violence, but the current zero-tolerance policy defies that legacy.

MITESOL and MABE call on the U.S. Congress and the administration to take the necessary steps to:

- Immediately stop any zero-tolerance policy that may result in harmful separation of undocumented children from their parents or family members
- Seek the immediate reunification of families presently separated under current enforcement policy
- Uphold international human rights law regarding asylum seekers and provide them with legal assistance and timely expedition of their cases
- Work together to draft a bipartisan solution to comprehensive immigration reform, including a path to citizenship for Dreamers (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).