Dear Young Center Supporter,

With springtime upon us, I’ve found myself reflecting on everything our community has accomplished over the past several months and the challenges we are still fighting to overcome in our mission to protect the rights and safety of immigrant children. This winter hasn’t been easy for immigrant children and their families. From policies aiming to deny children’s access to seek asylum with their parents to dehumanizing labor practices by American companies that have taken advantage of unaccompanied immigrant children, new challenges continue to arise. Still, the Young Center refuses to back down and has taken critical steps to expand our advocacy to support even more children forced to navigate our country’s immigration system alone.

Fighting to Keep Families Together & Protect Children’s Access to Seek Safety
I traveled to Matamoros, Mexico this past winter to meet with families and children who are awaiting the chance to seek safety in the United States. With Title 42 still in place and news that the Biden administration is advancing plans to implement an asylum ban, families continue to be denied the opportunity to seek asylum together. Many of the mothers I met at the border are forced to decide between keeping their family together in dangerous and deadly conditions along the border or sending their children to the U.S. alone in the hopes that they can seek safety unaccompanied.

President Biden’s proposed asylum ban—which is expected to go into effect in May—would only exacerbate the devastating harms we have witnessed under Title 42 by forcing families to make an appointment to request asylum through a flawed phone app called CBP One and giving families only a short window of time to make their asylum claims.

In light of these attacks against children and their right to asylum, the Young Center has worked diligently to meet with families stuck at the border to answer their questions with care and compassion. Their stories are a constant reminder of why we do the work that we do and why the Young Center’s advocacy is critical to pushing back against dangerous measures that would tear families apart and keep children in danger.

Last month, in coalition with 37 immigrant rights and human rights organizations, we came together with thousands of people across the country and submitted over 32,000 comments against President Biden’s proposed asylum ban. This included Young Center’s donors and supporters like you. Thank you for taking action! Although we haven’t won this battle, we have shown that thousands of Americans stand with immigrant children and their families. Our fight continues.
Young Center Launches New Initiatives to Further Protect Immigrant Children

Far too often, immigrant children are involved in complex state court systems that lack access to the support and resources to effectively consider how a child's lack of immigration status impacts their long-term safety and well-being. Last October, the Young Center launched its new Technical Assistance Program (TAP) which strives to bridge this information gap and build the capacity of agencies and advocates to navigate the inevitable complexities that arise when immigrant children are involved in multiple legal systems. Over the past six months, TAP has largely focused its efforts on providing consultations to child welfare stakeholders working with immigrant children, including those serving children separated from their families during the parent-child separation crisis under the previous administration. These consultations involve navigating complex custody issues and supporting service providers helping immigrant children and families repair the bonds that were ruptured when they were separated 5 years ago.

In addition to the launch of our new program, we proudly kicked off a pilot initiative in New Jersey to expand the work of our Child Advocate Program. After almost 20 years of primarily serving immigrant children in federal custody, this pilot initiative is significant because it makes New Jersey the first state to sanction the appointment of Child Advocates for unaccompanied immigrant children or similarly situated youth living in New Jersey who are navigating challenging legal and non-legal systems in the state. In addition to advocating for children's access to services in their communities such as housing, medical, mental health, or education, Young Center Child Advocates in New Jersey will provide key decision makers in the state's courts with recommendations that center children's rights, safety, and best interests. Our goal is that this program will serve as a model for other states to follow suit.

Connecting with International Partners

In February, I had the honor of attending and speaking at the Hispanics in Philanthropy (HiP) international summit in Costa Rica on the human rights of migrants. The summit focused on the intersectionalities of migration and climate, democracy, gender, and race. While addressing attendees on the developments and challenges facing immigrant children, I discussed the importance of collaboration across transit and destination countries to better protect immigrant children traveling alone or who are separated from family at the U.S.-Mexico border. At a systemic level, I highlighted the importance of challenging policies through judicial avenues and holding governments accountable for militarizing borders and implementing policies that punish and harm children and families seeking safety.

Our Voice, Our Power

Over the coming months, we will undoubtedly hear about further developments by the administration to advance its proposed asylum ban. The Young Center has never buckled under these challenges and is ready to do everything in our power to ensure the safety, rights, and well-being of children are put first. It will take each and every one of us to come together to ensure children are protected, and we could not be more grateful for the dedication of our staff, our volunteers, and supporters like you who help make our advocacy possible.

In solidarity and with gratitude,

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P.S. If at anytime you’d like an update on the work the Young Center, don’t hesitate to reach out to me. You can also find more information on the above referenced reports and news on our website: http://www.theyoungcenter.org