

The Honorable Ron DeSantis, Governor of Florida  
Office of the Governor  
400 S. Monroe St.  
Tallahassee, FL, 32399-0001

January 21, 2022

Governor DeSantis:

As local faith-leaders of diverse backgrounds across the state of Florida, we write to strongly urge you to reconsider the emergency order you have imposed blocking the issuance and renewal of state licenses to Florida-based organizations that serve unaccompanied children in partnership with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Motivated and guided by our faith to serve children, welcome the stranger, and love our neighbor, many people of faith, houses of worship, and faith-based organizations have accepted this call to live out our faith by being on the front lines of serving vulnerable children, both born in the United States or abroad. The [mission](#) of the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) is “to work in partnership with local communities to protect the vulnerable, promote strong and economically self-sufficient families, and advance personal and family recovery and resiliency.” As people of faith and leaders of organizations that have served vulnerable children and families in Florida for decades, we fully support this mission. However, the recently enacted emergency order restricts the ability of faith communities and faith-based organizations to serve vulnerable families by requiring us to choose only one group of vulnerable children to serve.

We note that unaccompanied children who arrive in the United States without legal guardians are granted special protection under the *William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act* (TVPRA). This law requires unaccompanied minors from non-contiguous countries who are received by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to be transferred into the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). To keep these children safe, ORR relies on a network of childcare providers—including faith-based organizations that our houses of worship partner with—to provide temporary care in shelters or with foster families until the child reunites with their vetted and approved family member or sponsor. These childcare providers are legally required to be licensed by state officials to ensure proper state oversight and the wellbeing of children. Blocking the issuance and renewal of these state licenses prevents families from serving as foster parents for migrant children and prevents agencies from coordinating care for Florida-born children in need of foster families.

As a governor who frequently speaks out on religious pro-life convictions and a father yourself, we implore you to reconsider your decision. Vulnerable children, regardless of where they are born, have the right and inherent dignity to receive love and care. Florida should not be the one saying, “there is no room at the inn.” We look forward to hearing back from you and working together to serve the best interests of all children in our great state.

Respectfully,

**Florida Faith Leaders:**

Ryan Adams, Pastor, City Beautiful Church (Orlando)  
Jon Aragón, Family Life Director, Living Faith Bible Fellowship (Tampa)

Dale Aubrey, Pastor, Titusville First Church of The Nazarene  
Phillip Baber, Pastor, People's Church of Jacksonville  
Donna Carlile, Reverend, Church of the Nazarene, Florida District  
Nahelis Colon, Pastor, Church of the Nazarene Casa de Vida  
Brian Douglas, Reverend, Center Point Church (Tallahassee)  
Tony Fisher, Reverend & Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greater Naples  
Dana Franchetti, Pastor, Church of the Nazarene (Clermont)  
Bethany Grosvenor, Pastor, Monticello Church of the Nazarene  
Shawn Grosvenor, Pastor, Monticello Church of the Nazarene  
William Hamilton, Reverend, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)  
Dr. Joel Hunter, Reverend, President of the Parable Foundation  
William Jenkins, Ordained Minister, Presbytery of Florida  
Russell Johnson, Senior Pastor, Global Church (Miami Gardens)  
Michael Joseph, Rabbi, Temple Shir Shalom of Gainesville  
Sean Lagasse Sr., Pastor, Purpose Church Orlando  
Barbara Leanza, Pastor, Spring Hill Calvary Church of the Nazarene  
Keith Ledford, Pastor, Faith Presbyterian Church  
Juan Lopez, Pastor, Iglesia del Nazareno (Winter Haven)  
Eve MacMaster, Pastor, Emmanuel Mennonite Church  
Aimee McCroskey, Ordained Elder, Church of the Nazarene (Bartow)  
Chrissy Mayer, Pastor, Grace Family (Tampa)  
Scott Oldham, Associate Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene (Winter Haven)  
Rebecca Putman, Minister, Westminster Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)  
Jayson Quinones, Bishop, Core Faith Church  
Dr. Ada Rivera, Reverend, Iglesia De Dios Pentecostal MI (Tampa)  
Dr. David Rivera, Senior Pastor, Iglesia De Dios Pentecostal MI (Tampa)  
Marcel Sanchez, Executive Pastor, Global Church (Miami)  
Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition (Orlando)  
Dale Schaeffer, District Superintendent, Florida District Church of the Nazarene  
Joel Tooley, Lead Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene (Melbourne)  
Pam Tooley, Associate Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene (Melbourne)  
Dr. Brian Wilson, District Superintendent, Southern Florida District Church of the Nazarene

#### **Other Florida Community & Faith Leaders:**

Joan Anderson, Program Coordinator, Baker Interfaith Friends (Gainesville)  
Quina Aragón, Author & Spoken Word Artist (Tampa)  
Emily Armstrong, Ordained Elder & Missionary, Church of the Nazarene (Naples)  
Kara Bellar, Executive Director, The Journey Church of Nassau County  
Kristen Bloom, Executive Director, Refugee Assistance Alliance  
Stan Boling, Youth Ministry, Gracespring Church (Vero Beach)  
Ann Brooks, Pastor's Wife, Deerlake UMC  
Mary Busby, Worship Director, Redeemer Bible Church  
Maruxa Cardenas, Co-Director, La Mesa Boricua de Florida  
Ron Carrier, Outreach Coordinator, Grace Community Church (Yulee)  
Joshua Chang, Small Group Leader, Sandals Church (Moreno Valley)  
Karen Collier, Ruling Elder, Riviera Presbyterian Church (Miami)  
Guadalupe De La Cruz, Florida Director, Florida American Friends Service Committee  
Karen Dewhurst, Children's Ministry Director, The Point Church (Pensacola)  
Giulianna Di Laura, State Director, Florida Poder Latinx  
Amanda Dittmer, The Nurture Place (Orlando)

Kenneth Dyches, Team Leader, Destino  
Kelly Irwin, Corpus Christi Catholic Church (Orlando)  
Juana Flores, Executive Director, Mujeres Unidas y Activas  
Kimberly Galindo-Diaz, Coalition Manager, Contra Costa Immigrant Rights Alliance  
Carly Garcia, Operations Manager, Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America  
Eunice Gick, Bible Study Leader, Church of the Redeemer (Sarasota)  
Joy Green, Vice President, Rise International  
Andreas Gronlund, Maintenance Overseer, Lakeside Church & Youth With a Mission  
Tanya Hardaker, Foster & Adoption Support, Refuge Church (Jacksonville)  
Laurel Hardgrove, Small Group Leader, Oak Hills Church (St. Petersburg)  
Mary Hegedish, Missionary, Campus Crusade for Christ/Cru (Orlando)  
Wendy Hofer, Deacon, Creekside Community Church (Gainesville)  
Porter Horne, Director, Immigrant Hope (Gainesville)  
Peniel Ibe, Committee Member, American Friends Service Committee  
Paula M. Jackson, Rector, Church of Our Saviour/La Iglesia de Nuestro Salvador (Cincinnati)  
Lark Kelsey, Women of the Word  
Mary Kemper, President & CEO, United Methodist Association of Health and Welfare Ministries  
Sister Kendrick, Community Relations, Hope Community Center (Apopka)  
Annette Kendzora, Children's Ministry Administrator, Crossings Community Church (Sanford)  
Sister Patricia Kirk, Leadership Team, Benedictine Sisters  
Dorothy Koblyanski, Deacon, First Christian Daytona Beach  
Elaine Lanaris, Elder, Riviera Presbyterian Church  
Joan Laney, Lay Leader, Binghampton United Methodist Mission  
Richard MacMaster, Coordinator, Interfaith Alliance for Immigrant Justice  
April McCullohs, Outreach Director, Grace Family Church  
Louis Medaris, Clergy Member (Live Oak)  
Andrea Melorango, Missionary Staff, YWAM Orlando  
Kristin Muschett, Lay Leader, Unitarian Church of Greater Naples  
Bill O'Brien, Executive Director, Strangers No Longer  
Maria Quintero, President of the Board, Bethany Christian Services Florida  
Albert Schenkel, Partnership Coordinator, Cru & Jesus Film  
Aurelia Smith, Faith Based Counseling (Niceville)  
Loryn E. Smith, CEO, Finally Home Christian Adoption Services  
Emily Smith, Missions Coordinator, Point Church (Pensacola)  
Laurie Anne Spagnola, President & CEO, Board of Child Care of the United Methodist Church  
Nancy Sullivan, Director, Transformations CDC  
Rhonda Thomas, Executive Director, Faith in Florida  
Antonio Tovar, FLIC Board Member, Farmworker Association of Florida  
John Vertigan, Conference Minister, Florida Conference UCC  
Tonya Whitlock, Teen Ministry, Love First  
Jenna Wimmer, Elder, City Beautiful Church (Orlando)

### **Florida Constituents:**

Paula Adams  
Caroline Adsmond  
Danielle Alcaldinho  
Sandra Alvarado-Raymond  
Margaret Anderson  
Stephanie Ascough

Carissa Baker  
Faith Beckett  
Karen Begeman  
Ruth Berry  
Merriel Bloomfield  
Joelene Boccaccio  
Angela Boling  
Stan Boling  
Kari Bollinger  
Lisa Borges dos Santos  
Sister Carol Boschert  
Makinzie Boyd  
Maria Brenan  
Olivia Brittenham  
Leah Brooks  
Florence Bryan  
Kimberly Buckhalt  
Hannah Budd  
Carolyn Burton  
Carolyn Burton  
Nydua Cabrera  
Thomas Cartwright  
Edda Castillo  
Mario Catalino Cintron  
Emily Ceriana  
Frances Chan  
Maria Ciro  
Nina Clark  
Mark Cloherty  
Kathleen Coco  
Corie Colliton  
Sarah Connatser  
Skye Cronje  
Ellie Crossman  
Rosie Cruz  
Eddie Cruz  
Rebekah Dasari  
Lois Anne Davis  
Stevie Day  
Catherine Deininger  
Frederick DeLuca  
Jeedoo Douglass  
Christine Dudding  
Heather Elizondo Vega  
Norma Fisher  
James Flasch  
Marjorie Flores-Levert  
Janna Flynn  
Victoria Garrison  
Andrew Garrison  
Esther Garvett

Anna Gibbs  
Barbara Gierzak  
Gary Glickstein  
Shannon Grine  
Amber Gronlund  
Sandy Hall  
Robyn Hammes  
Kelly Hilliard  
Hannah Hinojosa  
Rachel Hodges  
Laura Hollenberger  
Katie Holman  
Hilary Hopkins  
Paul Horne  
Porter Horne  
Holly Horner  
Christina Hughes  
Ami Jambusaria  
Kimberly King  
Katie Kuykendall  
Gladys Lane  
Jessica Lapen  
Allison Lee  
Caitlin Lindquist  
Katie Livermore  
Claudine Manasse  
Rebecca Manor  
Rachel Martinez  
Rachel Mcconkey  
Laura McKenzie  
Marianne McKillop  
Betty McVeigh  
Marisa Medina  
Patty Melvin  
Tony Merritt Jr.  
Rebekah Miles  
Jenny Millan  
Linda Miller  
Jacqueline Mills  
Rico Moreno  
Rachel Narwold  
Laci Neary  
Ida Nissen  
Pedmarlin Ocelus  
Emma Olson  
Melanie Ortiz  
Meredith Owen  
Maike Pacheco  
Leah Payne  
Mika Paz  
Narnike Pierre-Grant

Krisette Polka  
Priscilla Posey  
Mercedes Quiroga  
Lindsey Ray  
Marissa Rees  
Emilyann Reynolds  
Carolyn Richner  
Janet Ridgeway  
Karen Rinck  
Jerry Rivers  
Ashlee Roberts  
Donna Roberts  
Amy Robinson  
Karen Robinson  
Marina Rojas  
Marlys Samler  
Ashley Sawitski  
Sarah Schmidt  
Charlene Sells  
Caitie Sheppard  
Kevin Silvey  
Jennifer Sims  
Trudy Slagg  
Taylor Smit  
Emily Smith  
Victoria Spence  
Claire Stiles  
Quinn Swearingen  
Colin Thomas  
Emily Tovar  
Heather Trowell  
Vance Unruh  
Bernadette Urbina  
Ginger Valenti  
Karen VanderMey  
Lissette Villanueva  
Erin Ward  
Laura Way  
Iris Wilson  
Tricia Wright  
Nezahualcoyotl Xiuhtecutli, FWAF  
Carmen Zabalegui  
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