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, Pastor, 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
Maruixa 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)
Aurelia Smith, Faith Based Counseling (Niceville)
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
April 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 Alcaidinho
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 Garrett
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, FWA
Carmen Zabalegui
Amelia Zeder