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## OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT

### LET'S RE-UNITE CHILDREN AND PARENTS NOW!

**DETROIT (July 10, 2018)** – The Coalition led by the Detroit Branch NAACP which includes Grand Rapids Branch NAACP, Michigan State Conference NAACP, Michigan Conference United Church of Christ, Arab American Civil Rights League (ACRL), ACLU of Michigan, Greater Lansing Clergy Forum, LA SED, Progressive National Baptist Convention, UAW Region 1D, and LEAD Michigan supports the recent efforts of the Bethany Christian Center to re-unite children under 5 with their families. This coalition made a trip to Grand Rapids on June 27<sup>th</sup> to protest the separation of children from their families at the border by the Trump administration. It also included a sit-down discussion with officials at the Bethany Christian Center on the need to re-unite all children. The Federal court has determined that children under 5 must be re-united with their families as of July 10<sup>th</sup>. The Trump administration is seeking an extension due to the fact that they are unable to identify parent and child. In the words of a mother separated from her child at the border, *“Why was it so easy to take my child from me and yet so hard for you to bring my child back to me?”* This evil incompetence on the part of the Trump administration reflects the malfunction in the very heart of the American spirit.

America has traditionally been a nation that has welcomed asylum-seekers. It is reported that both legal, as well as those who may fall into an illegal category, are being turned away at the border. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, *“Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”* Both the United Nations 1951 Convention related the status of refugees and the 1967 protocol relating the status of refugees guides national legislation concerning political asylum. The United States has traditionally recognized the right of asylum of individuals specified by both federal and international law. While we remain cautiously optimistic about the re-unification of the children under 5 with their families, only 38 of 102 have been re-united at this time. In addition to this, there are still 2900 children over 5 who are also separated, and the court has mandated that they must be re-united with their parents by July 27<sup>th</sup>. U.S. District Judge Dolly M. Gee indicated that this entire situation, *“was an ill-considered executive action.”* We agree with the judge in this case.

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We also note that Bethany President and CEO Chris Palusky agrees with our coalition. As he said, *“The forced separation of refugee children from asylum-seeking families is a gaping wound in our country, and this wound cannot even begin to heal until every child is reunited with their families. It is never OK to separate a child from their family. When they are seeking asylum, they are fleeing. The definition of refugee is someone who is fleeing for their lives or security.”* This is exactly the position that many of us across the country who believe in the dignity of all people have been advocating. It is even made clearer by the words of Jesus the Christ who reminds us all, *“I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. Naked and you clothed me. I was a stranger and you took me in,”* Matthew 25:35. We must continue to keep the pressure on our elected officials, in particular President Donald Trump, and his surrogate Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who created this mess. The current action is not enough. Further, we cannot trust the Trump administration to do what is right. They regularly seem to do only that which is politically expedient. We as a nation must reach down within ourselves to bring the best out of ourselves. We all know that America is better than this. **LET’S RE-UNITE THE CHILDREN WITH THEIR FAMILIES NOW!**

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