

City of Takoma Park, Maryland

Office of the City Council

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Kate Stewart, Mayor

August 16, 2019

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor, District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 406
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Brandon Todd
Councilmember, Ward 4
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 105
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser and Councilmember Todd,

I am writing on behalf of the Takoma Park City Council to support your efforts to oppose children being subjected to inhumane conditions by the United States government. We understand that there is a proposal to house over 200 unaccompanied minors from ages 12 to 17 at 6896 Laurel Street NW in Washington, DC near the Takoma Park border. We fully support Mayor Bowser's assertion that we should not accept "a new federal facility, least of all one that detains and dehumanizes children."

Current federal immigration policies are deeply disturbing. We are a nation of immigrants and we should be committed as a country to treating all people with dignity. The recent track record of the U.S. government in housing asylum seekers and other newcomers to our country is appalling. Media accounts of children in cages and the stories of abuse are sickening.

We understand that there is a need to temporarily house unaccompanied minors that have entered the country until they are settled into families. However, it is essential that those facilities be safe and meet the children's needs. The property at 6896 Laurel Street NW is in no way adequate to house 200 children. Moreover, the center would be run by a company with no experience running facilities for children. These facts, along with many other factors, reinforce our deep concern that the U.S. government will allow conditions that would be unsuitable and unhealthy as well as dangerous for these children. Additionally, the \$20,549,911 contract could be spent to

unite the children with family and provide them with the medical and mental health services they need rather than the inhumane imprisonment of children.

We also share your concern for the safety and wellbeing of our local immigrant communities. The presence of this facility, even though it is operated by the Department of Health and Human Services, may mean an increase in the presence of ICE personnel in connection with these children. We fear that any increased presence of ICE will create tremendous fear among our residents, regardless of their immigration status. We will continue to emphasize that we are a sanctuary city. We will support efforts to ensure that our residents know their rights, and to remind individuals, businesses, and other entities that ICE must present a valid warrant before engaging in any immigration-related arrests.

We wish to state that the City of Takoma Park is a welcoming community, open to immigrants of all ages. If a facility for unaccompanied minors is located in or near Takoma Park against our joint strong opposition, the young people will know that we see their humanity and believe in their rights to safety and security.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kate Stewart", is written over a horizontal line.

Kate Stewart
Mayor

cc: Senator Ben Cardin
Senator Chris Van Hollen
Congressman Jamie Raskin
Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton
District of Columbia Council
ANC Representatives
Takoma Park City Council