

January 30, 2023

Dear Members of Congress,

As Christian organizations and individuals dedicated to the protection of children and combating human trafficking, we're writing to express our deep concern with a recently introduced bill in the U.S. House of Representatives, H.R. 29.

This bill would effectively nullify several important provisions of the *William Wilberforce Trafficking Protection Reauthorization Act* (TVPRA) of 2008 governing the treatment of certain unaccompanied children. This bill, which was passed with broad bipartisan support and signed into law by President George W. Bush, has been a vital tool in protecting children and others who are uniquely vulnerable to human trafficking.

The TVPRA of 2008, along with previous and subsequent reauthorizations of the landmark Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, establishes U.S. policies to prevent human trafficking, prosecute traffickers, and protect victims and survivors. Among many important pieces of U.S. anti-trafficking policy enshrined in the law, the TVPRA governs how children unaccompanied by a parent or legal guardian and apprehended at the U.S. border are to be treated. To protect these uniquely vulnerable children from the threats of trafficking or other exploitation, the TVPRA requires unaccompanied children arriving at the border to be screened by trained social workers and lawyers to determine whether they are victims of trafficking or at risk of being trafficked. **We urge you to vote against any legislation that would roll back these crucial anti-trafficking protections, including H.R. 29 in its current form.**

Our concerns are rooted in our Christian faith, believing that each person is made in the image of God and is worthy of protection. In particular, a child unaccompanied by his or her parent(s) is uniquely vulnerable.

Current law rightly ensures that these children are protected by the U.S. government until a further disposition can be made on their eligibility to stay permanently in the United States. Under H.R. 29, many such children would instead be returned to situations where they would be at risk of trafficking, violence or other harm.

As you deliberate on this request, thank you for standing in the gap to protect "the least of these" from trafficking and exploitation.

Sincerely,

Bethany Christian Services

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

International Justice Mission US

National Association of Evangelicals

National Latino Evangelical Coalition

Women of Welcome

World Relief

World Vision US