

Protect Children from Family Separation: Pass Orlin's Law

Amid increased Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity, over 145,000 U.S. children have been separated from a parent, including 36% who are under age six. The detention or deportation of a parent or primary caregiver, and the family separation that often follows, can have **immediate, devastating and lasting consequences for dependent children**.

Orlin's Law was named after three-year-old Orlin Hernandez Reyes, a U.S. citizen who was placed in his uncle's care when his mother was arrested and deported, despite her request that ICE allow her son to leave the United States with her. Orlin was subjected to horrific physical and sexual abuse and, just weeks later, killed by his uncle.

Congress must pass Orlin's Law to preserve family unity, safeguard children's lives, and protect parental rights by imposing sensible limits on the detention of parents and primary caregivers; ensuring they can make decisions about the care and custody of their children and participate in proceedings concerning them; and allowing families to remain together during deportation when they choose to.

WHY THIS MATTERS



Prevent harm to children

Separation from a parent, even if short-lived, can be devastating to children's physical, mental, and behavioral health. It can lead to psychological trauma, depression, anxiety, developmental disruption or regress, and poorer academic outcomes. It also increases the risk of unsafe or unstable care arrangements, including neglect, and physical and sexual abuse. The effects of parental separation and trauma can persist in adulthood, including a higher risk of chronic conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.



Protect parental rights and close the legal gap

U.S. law has long recognized parents' fundamental right to the care and custody of their children. Yet, detention or deportation can prevent parents from exercising those rights in practice. Orlin's Law would help ensure that immigration enforcement does not strip parents of their ability to make decisions about their children's care and custody, regardless of immigration status.



Prioritize public safety

Limiting detention to parents and caregivers who pose genuine public safety risks allows ICE to focus enforcement resources on individuals who pose the greatest threat, while using supervised release for parents and caregivers who can safely remain in the community.



CONGRESSIONAL ASK

Pass Orlin's Law (H.R.9745)

- Limit the detention and deportation of parents and primary caregivers to exceptional circumstances where ICE can demonstrate a public safety risk that cannot be addressed through supervised release.
- Protect the rights of parents who remain in detention by ensuring they can make decisions about the care and custody of their children and participate in proceedings affecting their children.
- Preserve family unity during deportation by allowing parents to leave the U.S. with their dependent children when they wish to do so.

Documented harm to children following caregivers' detention or deportation by ICE

14-year-old cancer patient loses primary caregiver to ICE detention

Minneapolis, MN | February 2026

A 14-year-old boy undergoing treatment for leukemia was separated from his father, his primary caregiver, after ICE detained him. Five weeks later, when the boy finally returned to his cancer clinic, blood tests showed that he had stopped taking his medication. The distant relatives caring for him did not understand his treatment regimen and had not ensured he took his medicine. His pediatric oncologist described the broader impact of the enforcement surge on patients as "catastrophic."

Young children in distress after father's detention by ICE

Los Angeles area, CA | December 2025

After ICE detained their father, all three children showed serious signs of distress. The 7-year-old daughter became depressed, stopped eating, saw her grades fall sharply, and began forgetting letters and numbers she had previously known. Her 9-year-old brother struggled to sleep and their 1-year-old sister, who had already learned to walk, regressed to crawling and cried out for her father in her sleep. The sudden loss of their parent severely disrupted the children's emotional well-being, development, and sense of security.

15-year-old U.S. citizen loses sole caregiver to deportation

Los Angeles, CA | October 2025

When ICE deported Damian's father, his sole caregiver, who supported his daily needs and took him to medical appointments, Damian's life rapidly deteriorated. The 15-year-old U.S. citizen, who has autism, ADHD, and other serious health conditions, stopped eating, withdrew from friends and school, cried in class, and saw his grades decline. ICE officers did not ask about Damian or assess his well-being before deporting his father.

3-year-old spends months in foster care after mother's detention

Greenville, OH | July 2025

After ICE detained his mother, Ingrid Mejia, three-year-old Eliazar spent more than four months separated from her in foster care. When Mejia was released, Eliazar recognized her but did not speak to her and had become so attached to his foster family that child-welfare officials initially recommended a gradual reunification. A psychiatrist warned that the prolonged separation put him at risk of serious psychiatric and learning problems, illustrating how immigration detention can disrupt a young child's development and bond with a parent.