



Galveston-Houston Immigrant
Representation Project

GHIRP Statement on the Near-Total Termination of Funding for the Unaccompanied Children Program

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HOUSTON – Elizabeth "Chiqui" Sanchez Kennedy, Executive Director of the Galveston-Houston Immigrant Representation Project (GHIRP), issued the following statement in response to the government's devastating decision to eliminate funding for legal representation for unaccompanied children:

"Today, GHIRP was notified that the government is eliminating funding dedicated to our Immigrant Children & Youth program. Effective immediately, we are forced to halt representation for hundreds of children who depend on our advocacy, leaving them vulnerable to deportation and potential harm. This near total shutdown requires GHIRP to stop representing existing clients immediately, leaving thousands of vulnerable children without critical legal services. **While similar to the February Stop Work Order, this contract termination seems like an effort to permanently dismantle the program.**

Now 26,000 children nationwide must defend themselves against deportation without an attorney by their side. These children, some as young as toddlers, will now have to face government attorneys alone, expected to navigate a complex legal system they cannot possibly understand. GHIRP serves 1,500 children every year through this funding and has over 300 clients who rely on our zealous advocacy. These legal services keep our clients safe from harm, exploitation and trafficking.

The decision coincides with the administration instituting 'rocket dockets,' fast-tracking detained children into immigration court while simultaneously stripping them of their right to legal counsel and limited "Friend of Court" (attorney-of-the-day) services.

We have seen firsthand the life-changing impact of legal representation, protecting children from trafficking and violence, reuniting families, and securing legal protections they are entitled to under U.S. law. Eliminating this funding is not just cruel; it directly attacks due process and fundamental fairness.

Our clients are core to our mission and central to GHIRP's origin story. GHIRP is rooted in the foundational principal that **fundamental fairness** is achieved when immigrants have a voice in their legal process. Legal representation uplifts and amplifies client voices, ensuring due process. GHIRP

will not waver from carrying out our mission, we will continue zealously advocating for our immigrant children and youth clients.”

TAKE ACTION NOW

- **SIGN:** Defend Legal Services for Unaccompanied Children – Send a letter to your elected officials to protect children's rights and #SaveUCP. **Could you help us reach 100K emails? Share this link:** [Tinyurl.com/protect-kids](https://tinyurl.com/protect-kids)
- **JOIN:** UCP Webinar – *What are the threats unaccompanied kids face?* Join the live discussion with former unaccompanied children, legal experts, and advocates. **Monday, March 24, 2025 | 🕒 11 AM PST / 2 PM EST | 📍 Zoom: Register & share:** tinyurl.com/ucpwebinar
- **RAISE AWARENESS:** share this post on all your social media platforms to engage with elected officials and hold them accountable. Make your voice heard!

We call on Congress to immediately restore funding for legal services and ensure that no child is forced to navigate the immigration system alone.

Please consider donating to GHIRP to support our fight: www.ghirp.org/donate

For media inquiries or to learn more about how you can help, please get in touch with info@ghirp.org.

#ProtectUnaccompaniedKids #SaveUCP #DefendUCP #ChildrensRights