****

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** [Megan Taylor](mailto:Megan_Taylor@heller.senate.gov) |
| June 19, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller, 11 Republican Senators Urge Justice Department to Stop Family Separations Until Congress Passes a Legislative Solution**

**WASHINGTON –** U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) joined U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and a group of Republican senators in urging U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions to stop the practice of separating families who have illegally crossed the U.S.-Mexico border. The senators asked the Justice Department to delay enforcement of this policy until Congress can pass legislation to keep families together.

*“Although enforcing our immigration laws is an essential responsibility of the federal government, it must be done in a way that is consistent with our values and ordinary human decency,”* **wrote the senators.** *“We support the administration’s efforts to enforce our immigration laws, but we cannot support implementation of a policy that results in the categorical forced separation of minor children from their parents.* *We therefore ask you to halt implementation of the Department’s zero tolerance policy while Congress works out a solution that enables faster processing of individuals who enter our country illegally without requiring the forced, inhumane separation of children from their parents.*”

U.S. Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Pat Roberts (R-KS), Susan Collins (R-ME), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Bob Corker (R-TN), Lamar Alexander (R-TN), John Boozman (R-AR), Cory Gardner (R-CO), James Lankford (R-OK), and Bill Cassidy (R-LA) also signed the letter.

**The full text of the letter can be found below**:

*Dear Mr. Attorney General:*

*Like millions of Americans, we have read with increasing alarm reports of children being separated from their parents at the southern border. Although enforcing our immigration laws is an essential responsibility of the federal government, it must be done in a way that is consistent with our values and ordinary human decency.*

*The current family separation crisis has multiple contributing causes, including court decisions that require release rather than detention of children but not parents who enter our country illegally. But the immediate cause of the crisis is your Department’s recent institution of a “zero tolerance” policy under which all adults who enter the United States illegally are referred for prosecution, regardless of whether such individuals are claiming asylum and regardless of whether they are accompanied by minor children.*

*We support the administration’s efforts to enforce our immigration laws, but we cannot support implementation of a policy that results in the categorical forced separation of minor children from their parents. We therefore ask you to halt implementation of the Department’s zero tolerance policy while Congress works out a solution that enables faster processing of individuals who enter our country illegally without requiring the forced, inhumane separation of children from their parents. We believe a reasonable path forward can be found that accommodates the need to enforce our laws while holding true to other, equally essential values.*

###