

Religious leaders petition Congress to support immigrant children

by [Heather Adams](#)

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(RNS) Religious leaders urged President Obama and Congress to provide funding for legal assistance to unaccompanied migrant children who are in U.S. custody after fleeing violence, murder, and extortion abroad.

The emergency funds would go toward helping children who have entered the United States without lawful immigration papers and without a parent or guardian. The money could also help meet mental health needs.

Multiple speakers, including United Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcano and the Rev. David Vasquez, spokesman for the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, took part in a national teleconference Thursday (July 10). They then sent a petition signed by more than 3,800 people to Congress.

“We are asking President Obama, Congress and the Department of Homeland Security to do the right thing by providing funding for the care and due process of these migrant children—including the full implementation of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act,” said Carcano.

Carcano visited the Oxnard detention facility in California this week and said it was at capacity with 570 children. The children were clean and well-dressed, she said, but there were no funds for mental health care or legal assistance.

Rep. Zoe Lofgren, a Democratic congresswoman from California, emphasized that it is time for Congress to respond.

“None of this is perfect,” Lofgren said. But, she continued, “as a country we can step up and do a lot better.”