



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Trafficked, Exploited, and Missing: Migrant Children Victims of the Biden-Harris Administration

November 19, 2025

I'm glad we are here today to talk about protecting the most vulnerable among us.

We should all agree that children, all children, deserve to be safe and cared for.

No child should be placed in an unsafe home, exploited or forced to work in a dangerous place.

Unfortunately, this happens all too often – to both American children and migrant children.

And unaccompanied children —those children who arrive to the United States without their parents and without immigration status—are among the most vulnerable. And the most in need of our protection.

These children, often fleeing violence in their home countries, come to the U.S. alone, seeking asylum and sanctuary. They are children in need.

These children can become victims of traffickers on their way to the United States, and can become victims of traffickers once inside the U.S.

The stories we've all read about children being exploited and forced to work in unsafe environments are heartbreaking. As some of the witnesses noted in their testimony, this has been a real problem going back over a decade.

No matter the administration, this is unacceptable.

The Federal government must ensure appropriate care for these children and prioritize their safety and well-being.

While the Biden administration has made positive steps, there is more to be done.

This should not be an issue of politics – it should be about common decency and humanity.

Yet, I fear that migrant children are being used yet again by Republicans to score cheap political points.

When Trump was last in the White House, Republicans didn't focus on helping children.

Instead, the Trump administration separated thousands of children from their parents, and President-elect Trump's new border czar wants to do it again.

He wants to conduct massive raids on the immigrants in our communities, including those with American citizen children.

And this Congress, my Republican colleagues chose to ignore requests from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for new laws that would protect children.

They ignored a request to allow HHS to partner with the Department of Justice for anti-trafficking programs.

They also ignored a request to lower the cost-sharing requirements for grants that help trafficking victims, which make it easier for victims to get the help they need.

They also ignored a request to expand training programs that teach parents and caregivers about preventing human trafficking among youth.

Instead of passing these proposals, my Republican colleagues passed legislation that put unaccompanied children in even more danger.

Their legislation would allow unaccompanied children to stay in Border Patrol's jail-like facilities for weeks.

They would also send unaccompanied children back to the places they fled, where they are at enormous risk for exploitation and abuse.

They would also make it harder for children to obtain lawyers to help them navigate our incredibly complex legal system.

Democrats want to help children, not put them in more danger. I hope the witnesses today have recommendations for doing this

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