

CHAIR OF USCCB COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION DENOUNCES NEW RULE UNDERMINING EXISTING PROTECTIONS FOR IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

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WASHINGTON—Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, Chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration, condemned the final rule published by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) relating to the care and custody of immigrant children under the Flores Settlement Agreement. The agreement sets forth foundational principles and critical protections regarding the care, custody, and release of immigrant children who are in federal custody, including the general requirements that they be housed in the least restrictive setting and in licensed facilities for childcare.

The rule will drastically undermine existing Flores protections for immigrant children in federal custody.

“This rule will have heartbreaking consequences for immigrant children – those whom Pope Francis has deemed ‘the most vulnerable group’ among migrants,” said Vásquez. “It is an attempt by the Administration to circumvent existing obligations and undermine critical protections for these children. This rule will jeopardize the well-being and humane treatment of immigrant children in federal custody and will result in children suffering long-lasting consequences of being held for prolonged periods in family detention. We oppose this rule that we believe is unlawful and inhumane. Countless children will be harmed by this new rule and this is simply not acceptable.”

USCCB also opposed this rule when it was initially proposed by DHS and HHS by submitting **comments** detailing concerns with the rule and urging it be rescinded.