

**ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION No. 180
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
218th LEGISLATURE**

INTRODUCED JUNE 18, 2018

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE

District 37 (Bergen)

Assemblywoman CLEOPATRA G. TUCKER

District 28 (Essex)

Assemblywoman YVONNE LOPEZ

District 19 (Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman Jimenez, Assemblyman Schaer, Assemblywomen Lampitt, Mosquera, Murphy, Assemblyman Calabrese and Assemblywoman McKnight

SYNOPSIS

Urges support for the “Keep Families Together Act.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION urging the United States Congress to support the “Keep Families Together Act” and commends the efforts of U.S. Senators Menendez and Booker for sponsoring the Act.

WHEREAS, On April 6, 2018, the United States Department of Justice enacted a “zero tolerance” policy under which all unauthorized crossings at the Southwestern border of the United States will be treated as criminal offenses, instead of civil offenses; and

WHEREAS, On May 7, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that all adults who arrive at the border would be prosecuted for illegal entry, even if they attempt to seek asylum; and

WHEREAS, These federal policies separate families crossing the border without authorization, since the parents are placed in criminal detention centers while the children are taken into the care of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and

WHEREAS, During a May 24, 2018, Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, U.S. Customs and Border Protection testified that 658 children were taken from 638 parents during a 14-day period in May, an average of 47 children being taken from their parents each day; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Senators Bob Menendez, the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), and Cory Booker, also a member of the SFRC, joined 30 other U.S. Senators in announcing introduction of Senate Bill No. 3036, the “Keep Families Together Act,” to keep immigrant families together and prevent the U.S. Department of Homeland Security from separating children from their parents at the border; and

WHEREAS, The “Keep Families Together Act” was developed in consultation with child welfare experts to ensure the federal government is acting in the best interest of children; and

WHEREAS, To ensure the “Keep Families Together Act” protects the welfare of children, the bill allows children to be separated from their parents only in the event they are being trafficked or abused by their parents and provides for an immediate review by a superior upon the recommendation to separate, and only after consultation with a child welfare expert; and

WHEREAS, This nation has a responsibility to ensure children and families are able to apply for asylum, trafficking protection, and other specialized forms of relief without the paralyzing fear of being separated and shipped off to different facilities across the country and the federal government’s actions should be halted; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey (the Senate concurring):*

1. The Legislature of the State of New Jersey supports federal legislation to keep immigrant families together and prevent the United States government from separating children from their parents at the border.
2. The Legislature of the State of New Jersey urges the United States Congress to support Senate Bill No. 3036, the “Keep Families Together Act,” and commends the efforts of U.S. Senators Menendez and Booker for sponsoring the legislation.
3. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly and the Secretary of the Senate to the President and Vice President of the United States; the Majority and Minority Leaders of the United States Senate; the Speaker and Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives; and every member of Congress elected from this State.

STATEMENT

This resolution commends and supports New Jersey’s federal Senators Menendez and Booker for sponsoring the “Keep Families Together Act.” This federal legislation keeps immigrant families together and prevents the United States government from separating children from their parents at the border.

On April 6, 2018, the Department of Justice announced a new “zero-tolerance” policy, under which all immigration violations along the Southwestern border are to be treated as criminal offenses. The result of these policies is that families who cross the border without authorization are divided. The parents are taken to criminal detention centers and the children are taken into the care of the Department of Health and Human Services.

It has been reported that the motivation for these policies is not the safety of the children, but merely to deter persons from committing immigration violations.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians, and the American Psychiatric Association, together representing more than 250,000 doctors in the United States, are requesting an immediate reversal of the “zero tolerance” policy, citing the potential for physical and emotional harm to the children.

The “Keep Families Together Act” was developed in consultation with child welfare experts to ensure the government is acting in the best interest of children. The federal legislation is currently supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Kids In Need of Defense, Coalition

for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, Children's Law Center, and the Young Center for Immigrant Rights.