



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Civil Rights Groups Outraged at Death of Seven-Year Old Child in Border Patrol Custody; Demand Congressional Hearings, Investigation

WASHINGTON, DC—Last week while in border patrol custody, Jakelin Caal, a seven-year old migrant girl from Guatemala died from severe dehydration and septic shock. Civil and human rights groups today expressed their outrage and devastation both at the needless, tragic loss of a young child and policies that violate human and civil rights, our values as a nation and basic decency. These groups today called on Congress to hold oversight hearings as soon as possible to investigate the circumstances of the child’s death and the policies that led to this tragedy.

“What happened to that little girl is heartbreaking and infuriating. It was also sadly inevitable under an administration that not only pursues cruelty for cruelty’s sake in its immigration policies but refuses to treat communities of color with a modicum of respect, dignity or humanity. We demand an in-depth investigation of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency and call on Congress to stop this human rights crisis now,” said **UnidosUS President and CEO Janet Murguía**.

“If anyone still doubted that this administration’s immigration policies are unjust and inhumane, the death of a seven-year-old child in Border Patrol custody should provide a definitive answer,” said **Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.** “This tragedy lays bare the monstrous policies being pursued in the name of the American people. Instead of working with Congress to devise an effective immigration system that respects human rights, the administration has unilaterally chosen a cruel and unsustainable detention policy, a course it justifies by stoking fears and resentments, and by ignoring our nation’s long history of welcoming immigrants, who are drawn here by our commitment to each person’s right to life, liberty and the pursuit of

happiness. If that commitment still holds—if we are still a compassionate nation that cherishes each person’s dignity—then there is only one response to the death of this little girl: Enough.”

"It is unconscionable that an immigrant child should die while in the custody of our government, and CBP should be ashamed," said **Vanita Gupta, President and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights**. "We should all be ashamed. Not only is the death of seven-year-old Jakelin Amei Rosemary Caal Maquin a tragedy, but it highlights longstanding problems with our government’s deadly border militarization. CBP’s reckless behavior is a direct result of the lack of oversight by the Trump administration and Congress. It is not enough to investigate this one needless death. Congress must investigate and significantly reform our border enforcement practices. We must continue fighting for the basic human rights of and immigrants, including children like Jakelin."

UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation’s largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels. For 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our country stronger. For more information on UnidosUS, visit www.unidosus.org or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. The Leadership Conference works toward an America as good as its ideals. For more information on The Leadership Conference and its member organizations, visit www.civilrights.org.

*Founded in 1940, the **NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)** is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization and has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.*