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**Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia Issues
Statement Condemning Administration’s Cancellation of Basic Services
for Detained, Unaccompanied Minors**

(Washington, D.C. – June 7, 2019) – Today, Leila Jade Levi, President of the Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia (HBA-DC), released the following statement in response to reports that the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement is cancelling programs for unaccompanied minors.

“HBA-DC condemns the Administration’s decision to cease funding basic services, including English classes, recreational services, and legal aid for unaccompanied minors in detention centers. News reports quote a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) spokesperson as saying that such activities are ‘not directly necessary for the protection of life and safety.’ This ignores the trauma and often uneven education that these unaccompanied minors face. Basic education and recreational programs are vital to their mental and physical health.

Legal assistance is particularly critical for these children, many of whom are fleeing violence and other life-threatening situations. Immigration legal service providers have contracted with the government to provide basic litigation support to the facilities where these children are detained. This includes helping them find counsel for immigration court proceedings, providing basic ‘know your rights’ presentations, and social services. These services are unequivocally necessary for the protection of life and safety.

This decision appears to violate HHS’s legal obligations, and deters asylum seekers from the due process to which they are entitled. Most notably, the moral bankruptcy of cutting these services shocks the conscience of a nation who asserts itself to be compassionate and just. HBA-DC urges the Administration to continue providing these services to the unaccompanied minors, and to enact fair and just policies toward immigrants, particularly toward children.”

About the HBA-DC

The Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, voluntary legal association representing the interests of Hispanic attorneys, judges, law professors, law students, and legal professionals within the greater Washington, D.C. area. Its mission is promoting the professional development of Hispanic lawyers and law students; promoting equal justice and opportunities for all Hispanics; and promoting the appointment of Hispanics to leadership positions in federal, state, and local governments, in the judiciary, and in other leadership positions. For more information, please visit <http://www.hbadc.org>.

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