

September 30, 2019

Re: Georgetown Law's Invitation to Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Kevin McAleenan to be the Keynote Speaker at the 16th Annual Immigration Law and Policy Conference

To Dean William M. Treanor,

Family separation. ICE raids. Forcing migrants from around the world¹ to wait in Mexico for their chance at claiming asylum in the United States. These are all policies that Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Kevin McAleenan has overseen and continues to oversee. The person in charge of leading and implementing these policies has been invited as the keynote speaker at the 16th Annual Immigration Law and Policy Conference, held at Georgetown Law. We, the undersigned students, faculty, and community of Georgetown Law refuse to welcome the Acting Secretary to our campus. We denounce everything that the Acting Secretary stands for and **we call on Georgetown Law to hold true to the values that it espouses and disinvite Acting Secretary McAleenan from speaking on our campus on Monday, October 7th, 2019.**

Mr. McAleenan became the head of the Department of Homeland Security on April 8th, 2019.² Since then, the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), has continued to implement the Trump Administration's white nationalist-inspired, anti-immigrant agenda, unleashing an all-out war against immigrants. During Mr. McAleenan's tenure as Acting Secretary, multiple children have died in CBP custody³ and have died trying to cross into the U.S. from Mexico.⁴

Mr. McAleenan's implementation of the Trump Administration's "Remain in Mexico" policy has forced tens of thousands of migrants to either wait in dangerous, life-threatening conditions in Mexico or risk their lives trying to cross into the U.S. outside a port of entry.⁵ Under the "Remain

¹ Jo Tuckman, "'We've been taken hostage': African migrants stranded in Mexico after Trump's crackdown," THE GUARDIAN (Sept. 30, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/sep/30/weve-been-taken-hostage-african-migrants-stranded-in-mexico-after-trumps-crackdown>.

² "Kevin K. McAleenan," DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (Aug. 1, 2019), <https://www.dhs.gov/person/kevin-k-mcaleenan>.

³ Nicole Acevedo, "Why are migrant children dying in U.S. custody?," NBC NEWS (May 29, 2019), [https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/why-are-migrant-children-dying-u-s-custody-n1010316?fbclid=IwAR38n79Vu1jBLEjqEPL8NCeCJ7qaGinN2TJOuTfEkVI1BKJDyISX3Jee7Rs](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/why-are-migrant-children-dying-u-s-custody-n1010316?fbclid=IwAR38n79Vu1jBLEjqEPL8NCeCJ7qaGinN2TJOuTfEkVI1BKJDyISX3Jee7Rs;);

Shannon Van Sant, "Teenager Is Latest Migrant Child to Die In U.S. Custody," NPR (May 20, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/20/725117838/teenager-is-latest-migrant-child-to-die-in-u-s-custody>.

⁴ Stacy Fernandez, "This migrant mother and her child couldn't wait for their asylum court date anymore. They drowned trying to enter the U.S.," TEXAS TRIBUNE (Sept. 20, 2019), <https://www.texastribune.org/2019/09/20/migrant-mother-and-child-drown-crossing-rio-grande-enter-us/>; Chris Boyette, "Border Patrol says agents found the bodies of three people who died trying to cross the US-Mexico border," CNN (Aug. 28, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/28/us/border-patrol-deaths-us-mexico-border/index.html>.

⁵ Nicole Narea, "Border arrests dropped in August. That doesn't mean the crisis is over," VOX (Sept. 5, 2019), <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/9/5/20850888/us-border-arrest-migrants-august-immigration>; Joel

in Mexico” policy, U.S. immigration officials turned away a Honduran mother, Idalia Yamileth Herrera Hernandez and her 21-month-old son Iker Gael Cordova Herrera, when they tried to claim asylum at the border. Officials forced them to remain in Mexico to await their immigration court hearing.⁶ Just a few weeks ago, Idalia and Iker died trying to cross the Rio Grande from Mexico into Texas. There are now over 35,000 migrants waiting in Mexico, not knowing when, if ever, they will be safe.⁷

Acting Secretary McAleenan has also overseen the numerous ICE raids that have taken place in communities across the United States, ripping families apart, and forcing immigrants and their communities to live in fear and anguish.⁸ This summer, ICE arrested nearly 700 undocumented migrants while they were at work.⁹ News cameras captured their children sobbing, not knowing when they would see their parents again.

Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan has not only overseen family separation, he has actively advocated for it. Even before his appointment as Acting Secretary, when McAleenan was the head of Customs and Border Protection, he was one of three DHS officials to recommend family separation as an official policy.¹⁰ Despite a federal court ruling to end family separation, the Department of Homeland Security, under McAleenan’s authority, continues to separate migrant children from their families.¹¹

In addition to all of these cruel and inhuman policies, it is also Mr. McAleenan’s Department of Homeland Security that has kept migrants in severely unsanitary conditions in detention. It is Mr. McAleenan’s Department of Homeland Security that stood before a panel of federal judges in California and declared that soap, toothbrushes, and blankets were not basic human necessities.¹² It is Mr. McAleenan’s Department of Homeland Security that has kept children huddled together

Rose, “Fear, Confusion and Separation As Trump Administration Sends Migrants Back To Mexico,” NPR (July 1, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/01/736908483/fear-confusion-and-separation-as-trump-administration-sends-migrants-back-to-mex>.

⁶ Fernandez, “This migrant mother and her child couldn’t wait for their asylum court date anymore.”

⁷ Narea, “Border arrests dropped in August. That doesn’t mean the crisis is over.”

⁸ Miriam Jordan, “More Than 2,000 Migrants Were Targeted in Raids. 35 Were Arrested,” NEW YORK TIMES (July 23, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/23/us/ice-raids-apprehensions.html>.

⁹ Dianne Gallagher, Catherine R. Shoichet, and Madeline Holcombe, “Mississippi ICE raids: 680 undocumented workers arrested in record-setting immigration sweep on the first day of school,” CNN (Aug. 9, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/08/us/mississippi-immigration-raids-children/index.html>.

¹⁰ Brian Tashman, “Trump Picks Family Separation Advocate Kevin McAleenan to Be Acting Secretary of Homeland Security,” ACLU (Apr. 9, 2019), <https://www.aclu.org/blog/immigrants-rights/trump-picks-family-separation-advocate-kevin-mcaleenan-be-acting-secretary>.

¹¹ Richard Gonzales, “ACLU: Administration Is Still Separating Migrant Families Despite Court Order To Stop,” NPR (July 30, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/30/746746147/aclu-administration-is-still-separating-migrant-families-despite-court-order-to->

¹² Caitilin Dickerson, “Migrant Children Are Entitled to Toothbrushes and Soap, Federal Court Rules,” NEW YORK TIMES (Aug. 15, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/15/us/migrant-children-toothbrushes-court.html>.

in human cages with room not enough for them to even sleep.¹³ Mr. McAleenan's policies and his actions have shown him to be someone with sheer hatred and contempt towards migrants.

We, the Georgetown Law community, cannot allow a person who has overseen such dehumanizing and abominable policies to speak on our campus. Mr. McAleenan has endless platforms on which he can speak. Georgetown Law does not need to be one of them. Instead, we should take this opportunity to make a statement—that white supremacist, xenophobic, racist policies have no place on our campus nor in our country.

When the Trump Administration made it clear that it would pursue its attacks against DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and TPS (Temporary Protected Status) recipients, Georgetown University released a solidarity statement, in which it said: “In faith and solidarity, we ask that all staff and faculty at Georgetown University categorically support its undocumented student populations and help protect against racism, discrimination, bigotry and the realities of numerous immigration challenges, and advocate to offset federal policies that seek to penalize immigrant youth and divide students from their families. As well, we ask that the university support all its employees who may also be affected by federal policies, who are in various temporary protected status categories and whose future is also ambiguous.”¹⁴

Why are we now straying from that message? Why are we categorically supporting the person responsible for the racism, discrimination, and bigotry that so many in our community have faced? Now is the time to put our words into action—do not allow Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan to espouse racism, discrimination, and bigotry on our campus.

Sincerely,

Undersigned members of Georgetown/Georgetown Law Community

¹³ Chantal Da Silva, “Migrant Children Share Heartbreaking Stories of What It’s Like to Be Locked in U.S. Detention Centers: ‘There Are No Activities, Only Crying,’” *NEWSWEEK* (June 28, 2019), <https://www.newsweek.com/migrant-children-share-heartbreaking-stories-u-s-detention-1446447>.

¹⁴ “Solidarity Statement,” GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, <https://undocumented.georgetown.edu/solidarity-statement/>.