



# State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE PETER G. PALUMBO *District 16*

The Honorable Lincoln D. Chafee  
Governor of Rhode Island  
Room 224  
State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

July 17, 2014

Dear Governor Chafee:

As you are no doubt aware, our country is facing a crisis involving more than 50,000 children who have been caught crossing into the United States illegally. These undocumented children have made frightening journeys on their own from their homelands, and now the United States is facing difficult decisions about what to do with them, both immediately and ultimately.

I have nothing but sympathy for children who flee the sort of poverty and violence that has affected these youngsters. They are innocent victims who did nothing to deserve that life, and I cannot blame them or their families for their desperate attempts to seek safer conditions.

But their safety and long-term well-being is still at risk here in this country, and I urge you to take action to see that Rhode Island does not become responsible for the incredible financial burden and risks that would be involved in caring for them.

As you may know, our neighbors in Connecticut recently rejected a request by the federal government to house some 1,000 to 2,000 of the undocumented children in question at a facility in their state. While I do not know of any specific effort to house children in Rhode Island, I urge you to proactively notify the federal government that our state is not in a position to take on responsibility for any of them.

Rhode Island's budget is a precarious balance, and as you know, it already forces state agencies to pay for the recently negotiated employee contract from their existing resources, which will be no easy task. Much like our neighbor to the west, we cannot afford any additional costs that would no doubt come from housing hundreds or thousands of indigent, undocumented foreign children.

We also cannot afford the risk of the potential consequences. What would the government do with youngsters who come of age while in this housing? Would their medical needs cause drain on our local health care system? Would we be responsible for educating them, and how would that affect our schools? What about the risks of those who attempt to flee or who may turn to violence after months in captivity, and what are the psychological effects of keeping youngsters in such a situation? What about the long legal wrangling that will no doubt occur as the nation determines the fate of these poor children? What about the risk that these children will eventually be granted amnesty, but be left penniless and in need in our state? While I absolutely sympathize with their terrible plight, Rhode Island simply cannot afford to take on the many challenges and expenses and unanswered questions that would come with housing them.

Please consider my request as a means to ensure that Rhode Island citizens will be protected from the potential expense and risk of taking on this responsibility. If you would like to discuss this matter further, you may contact me at (401) 785-2882. I appreciate your consideration of this urgent issue.

Sincerely,



Peter G. Palumbo  
Representative – District 16  
Cranston