STEVE COHEN
9TH DISTRICT, TENNESSEE
2268 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

TELEPHONE: (202) 225-3265
FAX: (202) 225-5663

ODELL HORTON FEDERAL BUILDING
167 NORTH MAIN STREET
SUITE 369
MEMPHIS, TN 38103

TELEPHONE: (901) 544-4131
FAX: (901) 544-4329

WWW.COHEN.HOUSE.GOV

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4209

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

HOUSE PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

June 17, 2026

The Honorable Bill Lee
Governor of Tennessee
State Capitol
600 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Lee,

I write to urge you to revoke your directive to the Tennessee Department of Health that they report immigrant parents and their children who remain on the Department of Health Children's Special Services (CSS) Program past June 30th to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for deportation.

As you're aware, CSS was established in the 1930s and provides comprehensive medical care for children from birth to 21 years old with physical disabilities, such as Cerebral Palsy, Cystic Fibrosis, Sickle Cell Anemia, are in wheelchairs on oxygen support. In other words, these children are some of the sickest and most vulnerable in society.

My understanding is that you have directed the Tennessee Department of Health to report these children and their parents to ICE to comply with Tennessee Public Chapter No. 1106, which was enacted in late May.

Notwithstanding my firm belief that targeting the most vulnerable, sick children and their parents for deportation – for an immigration matter in which the children did not seek out – is morally repulsive, I note the interpretation is not based on the plain reading of the text. *"Except where prohibited by federal law, every state governmental entity, local governmental entity, and local health department shall verify, in the manner provided in this chapter, that* ***each applicant who is eighteen (18)*** *years of age or older and applies for a federal, state, or local public benefit from the state governmental entity, local governmental entity, or local health department is a United*

States citizen or lawfully present in the United States pursuant to the federal Immigration and Nationality Act"[1].

Underlined and in bold is the incongruent section – the children did not enroll in the program, they are a beneficiary of it. I understand that you and many in the Tennessee General Assembly wish to reduce the number of illegal immigrants in the state, but using a program designed to aid the most needy, sick, and vulnerable *children* is an inhumane approach.

I urge you to reverse your directive to the Tennessee Department of Health. As you wind down your term as Governor, consider your Christian background as you implement policies that will define your legacy:

"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 19:33-34

"*Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of my brethren, ye have done unto me*." Matthew 25:40

I urge you to reverse your directive to the Tennessee Department of Health.

As always, I remain,

Most sincerely,

Steve Cohen

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

[1] Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 4-58-103(a)(1).