

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Secretary Blinken and Secretary Mayorkas:

I write regarding the urgent need to expedite adoption procedures for Ukrainian orphans in danger, particularly those already undergoing immigration processes for adoption by families in the United States. As our nation continues to provide support and humanitarian relief to the Ukrainian people in their fight for sovereignty, we must take concrete steps to bring orphans in critical danger to safety in our country.

Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has created a dire humanitarian crisis, leading millions of people to flee their homes. However, children without families have been left behind with no means to evacuate Ukraine's war-torn cities, making them particularly vulnerable to the resource constraints and violence rampant throughout Ukraine. As Russian forces continue to wage relentless attacks against civilians, we must do everything we can to bring these children to safety in the U.S. Doing so is particularly urgent given that President Putin banned American adoption from Russia in 2013 and could take similar measures if Russian forces continue to advance.

I urge the federal government to take additional steps to streamline adoption processes and expand applicable immigration statuses for Ukrainian children with adoption procedures already underway. Specifically, I ask that the State Department appeal directly to the Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy to grant permission to the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw to issue expedited nonimmigrant visas for children who have been previously hosted by families in the U.S. and are now in the process of being adopted by those families. I also ask that the State Department work with the Ukrainian government to allow families with adoptions in process to attend adoption court at the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington, D.C. rather than in Ukraine. Finally, I ask that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) work closely with the State Department to streamline humanitarian parole applications in conjunction with normal visa-issuing procedures.

To be clear, the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security should by no means compromise vetting standards for organizations that work with orphans or prospective parents in the interest of moving children out of Ukraine quickly. I ask that the federal government maintain all necessary protocols to ensure unaccompanied children do not face trafficking, exploitation, or abuse.

As part of our nation's effort to provide immediate help to the Ukrainian people, I ask that the Biden administration expedite immigration and adoption procedures for orphans, with special consideration for those with adoption processes already underway. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah K. Ross". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress