FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 03 July 2018
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Truman Project New York Chapter Thanks Governor Cuomo for Refusing New York National Guard Involvement at the Southern Border

New York, NY — Today, the Truman National Security Project's New York Chapter publicly thanked Governor Cuomo for refusing any involvement of New York National Guard troops on the southern border of the United States in response to the Trump Administration's increasingly draconian immigration policies.

Brooke Ellison, a Truman Security Fellow, said: "The needlessly punitive and draconian actions taken by the Trump administration to operationalize its 'zero-tolerance' agenda are an affront to all Americans and foundational American values, but they particularly violate the uniquely diverse culture that defines the State of New York. The inhumane treatment of immigrants, migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers coming to the United States for safety and opportunity makes a shameful mockery of the very characteristic that has always been the backbone of New York: The communities of people from all parts of the world, from all backgrounds, embodying all types of experiences, living and working side-by-side and making their contributions to the collective American dream. We see their diversity in our infrastructure, in our architecture, in our businesses, in our art, in our schools, in the very vitality that permeates New York streets. And, we are stronger and richer for it."

"The thousands of people who marched in New York City on June 30, protesting the anti-immigration policies, had the gift of culminating their protest in Brooklyn, where no fewer than 800 languages are spoken every day, and they had the honor to express their grief and outrage under the watchful eye of the Statue of Liberty, whose bedrock implores, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." This is our history. This is who we are. This is what is at stake. And any administration that does not recognize that America—and New York, specifically—is a country made great by its immigrants, or an administration that treats those most in need of care with dehumanizing disdain, also should not receive support to enact its agenda."

Truman is a nationwide membership of diverse leaders inspired to serve in the aftermath of 9/11 and committed to shaping and advocating for tough, smart national security solutions. The full text of the open letter sent to Governor Cuomo is below.

02 July 2018

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

As members of the Truman National Security Project's New York Chapter—including national security policy experts, political professionals, military veterans, and civilians who have served on the frontlines of conflict zones around the world—we are writing to thank you for standing against the Trump Administration's draconian immigration policy by refusing to deploy National Guard personnel and material to the southern border.

The past few weeks have seen upheaval and outrage as a particularly harmful policy enacted by the Trump Administration has resulted in the devastating separation of families. In April, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a "zero tolerance policy," which focused on charging more people with illegal entry; since those charged are then sent to federal prison where their children cannot join them, more than 2,300 children were consequently separated from their parents.

Though the president recently signed an executive order regarding the issue, it actually worsens the situation by calling for entire families to be kept in detention facilities indefinitely while awaiting prosecution. This latest executive order also does not end the zero tolerance policy, failed to address how the administration will reconnect the thousands of children already separated from their parents, and directs the Department of Defense to aid in running these new facilities.

In opposition to these and other policy failures, multiple governors have rightly chosen to withhold or recall their National Guard troops from border deployments, whether those deployments were urged by the Trump Administration or not. Thank you for being one of the governors who have refused to send our National Guard to the border in order to carry out any more of the administration's cruel and ineffective immigration policy.

Our National Guard is made up of trained warfighters, not law enforcement or border control officers. They have too many critical missions around the world to deploy along a nearly 2,000 mile border; such a deployment is not an efficient or strategic use of people, funding, or material resources. Moreover, because units of the National Guard are made up of troops from across state lines but deployed to the border in different groups, these deployments undermine training efforts, unit cohesion, and readiness. Put simply, continuing to deploy the National Guard to the border will leave them with fewer resources and less preparation for lethal combat abroad and humanitarian work at home.

Moreover, our state's National Guardsmen should not be asked to assist in any way in the implementation of policies that ultimately do nothing for our national security. There exists not a single national security argument for tearing parents from children or detaining families indefinitely—especially when those concerned are fleeing extreme violence in search of a better life. The United States has in place the systems and structures to vet those who arrive at our borders; those who do so illegally should be the concern of local law enforcement, not the U.S. military.

The Trump Administration's zero tolerance policy is a moral failure and abdication of American values, but it is far from an isolated incident. Since taking office, the president has demanded an ineffective border wall at the American taxpayer's expense, abruptly rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program without an alternative in place, ended multiple Temporary Protected Status programs for people whose home countries are still devastated by natural disasters, slashed the number of refugee admissions to historic lows, unconstitutionally sought to punish sanctuary cities, and launched increasingly cruel and expansive immigration raids countrywide. This is all part of a coordinated effort to move U.S. immigration policy backwards, and our state should play no part in supporting it.

We thank you for taking action. By refusing to send our family, friends, and neighbors in the National Guard to enforce this and other Trump Administration immigration policies, you have sent a message against these atrocious policies that do nothing to keep us safe and in favor of traditional American values of diversity, inclusion, and strength through moral leadership.

Very respectfully,

Truman National Security Project's New York Chapter