

Children's Health Fund Calls on Political Candidates to Stop Smearing Haitians, It's Doing Irreparable Harm to Children

Pediatrician and head of Children's Health Fund calls on political leaders to reject the use of lies and divisive tactics, especially those that harm children

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 20, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The following is a statement from Arturo Brito, MD, MPH, President and CEO of Children's Health Fund regarding the recent spread of false claims that Haitian immigrants are eating pets in Springfield, Ohio:

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The damage being done to these families, especially to the children, is profound and long-lasting.”

*Arturo Brito, MD, MPH,
President and CEO of
Children's Health Fund*

“As a Cuban immigrant, pediatrician, and leader of a national organization devoted to the health and well-being of all children and families, I feel compelled to speak out and stand in steadfast solidarity with the Haitian community during this time of hardship and unrest.

“I have provided healthcare to the residents of Little Haiti, a vibrant neighborhood of South Florida; worked alongside my island brothers and sisters who have settled into the United States; and have been to Haiti numerous times on medical mission trips. At no point did I ever witness or hear of anyone eating a dog or cat. This includes soon after the 2010 earthquake where an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 Haitians died and countless others lost an arm or leg, or were left paralyzed. No, instead, what I witnessed were lines of Haitians, most whose homes had been flattened and now lacked access to clean water and food, asking for work to help rebuild their country while providing for their families. They were not stealing. They were not asking for handouts. And they certainly were not eating cats or dogs.

“Try to imagine the unimaginable horrors that have driven the most current Haitian diaspora to risk their lives to enter the United States. Things must be pretty dire to leave your homeland, traverse treacherous waters, cross both jungle and desert, and put yourself in the hands of unscrupulous coyotes whose only interest is in taking your last few dollars. Spreading false narratives and creating an image of a people that is simply untrue just adds to this overwhelming trauma.

“At Children's Health Fund, we stand in strong opposition to this rhetoric being spread by certain political candidates and some media personalities, wrongfully accusing Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, of stealing & eating pets. It is an overtly racist and xenophobic narrative that has resulted in a wave of bomb threats against schools, hospitals, and government offices, stoking a climate of fear that has endangered the lives and well-being of Haitians, both in Ohio and throughout the country.

“The damage being done to these families, especially to the children, is profound and long-lasting. Some Springfield schools have been forced to close, with parents and caregivers keeping their children home for fear of violence. Haitian children, who have already endured the difficulties of relocating to a new country, are now being targeted solely because of their nationality.

They cannot attend school, play outside, or participate in community life without fear. The psychological trauma inflicted by this hateful rhetoric is immeasurable and can leave emotional scars that may not heal.

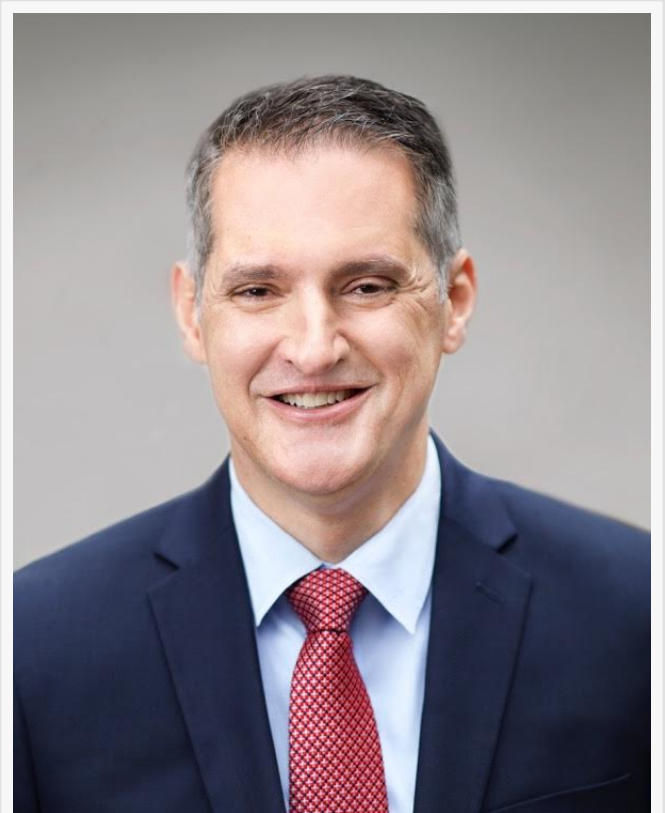
“Our commitment remains firm in promoting inclusion, health equity, and respect for all communities, particularly those unfairly targeted by divisive language and threats of violence. Now's the time for authentic leadership to end this division, engage in responsible dialogue, and focus on the real issues affecting children and families across the nation.

“We call on all political leaders to reject the use of lies and divisive tactics, especially those that harm children. We urge every politician, media personality, and public figure to stand against this rhetoric and work toward creating a safer, more inclusive environment for all children.”

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About Children's Health Fund

Children's Health Fund is the nation's foremost nonprofit dedicated to ensuring access to comprehensive healthcare for children growing up in under-resourced communities throughout the United States. For more than 37 years, CHF has mobilized and deployed more than \$230 million to support its initiatives throughout the country. Comprehensive medical, mental, dental,



Arturo Brito, MD, MPH, President and CEO of Children's Health Fund

and health-related social services are provided through a national network of 24 programs in 15 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. To date, its national network has provided 7 million health encounters, with almost half a million of those occurring in 2023. In addition, CHF has provided training to over 380 educators in NYC public schools through its Health and Ready to Learn program. CHF was founded in 1987 by singer/songwriter Paul Simon, pediatrician/child advocate Dr. Irwin Redlener, and program designer Karen Redlener. For more information, please visit <https://www.childrenshealthfund.org/>

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