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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

June 18, 2018

VICE CHAIR AND PARLIAMENTARIAN
STEERING AND POLICY

PARLIAMENTARIAN OF THE WHIP

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
SUBCOMMITTEES:

RANKING MEMBER—EARLY CHILDHOOD,
ELEMENTARY, AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

HIGHER EDUCATION AND
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

VICE RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

Director Scott Lloyd
Office of Refugee Resettlement
Administration for Children and Families
Dept. of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Commissioner Kevin McAleenan
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Dept. of Homeland Security
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20229

Dear Director Lloyd and Commissioner McAleenan,

I am writing out of concern for the nearly 2,000 children being separated from the families at the United States-Mexico border. Most of these families, that are being cruelly separated, have come to the United States seeking asylum, fleeing violence in their home countries. Instead of implementing a policy that keeps families intact while navigating the United States' lengthy immigration process, your Administration has turned to ripping families apart and placing children in the care of either government facilities or foster care. The fact that your Administration is actively pursuing a policy to traumatize young children under the guise of deterrence demonstrates the lack of decency and respect for the family unit. Further, it likely violates due process protections put in place to protect the Constitutional rights of parents and children.

According to a spokesperson for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), there are 11,000 children that are currently located in government facilities and these facilities are at 95 percent capacity. News reports indicate that children being newly separated from their parents are being placed with foster-families within state-foster care systems.¹ The Administration's intentional separation of families has led to children as young as 18 months old getting placed into foster-care settings hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles away from their biological parents with no way to contact them or given any indication of when they may be reunited.² Even more troubling is that ICE, DHS and ORR seem to lack any type of coordinated effort or basic standard procedures to reunite children with the parents once the parents have been released from detention centers.

As a member of the Colorado Congressional delegation, I demand responses to following inquiries related to the placement of children with Colorado-based government facilities or foster-families:

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/06/09/us/ap-us-immigration-families-washington-state.html>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/07/us/children-immigration-borders-family-separation.html>

1. How many unaccompanied children that have been separated from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border have been placed in Colorado-based care (either in a government operated facility or with foster-families)?
2. What organizations in Colorado provide resettlement services (either temporary or permanent) to unaccompanied children in coordination with your office and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)?
3. What types of services are being provided to the children? What types of services are being provided to foster families to ensure that the care being provided is culturally sensitive and helps them understand the immigration process?
4. What is ORR doing to ensure that children currently separated from their families can maintain contact with their biological parents (if the child was not separated as a result of a finding of abuse or neglect)?
5. What is ORR doing, in coordination with ICE, to ensure that parents are given information regarding the placement of the children, including the location, contact information and a care-plan?
6. What is ORR doing to ensure that due process is being followed to protect the rights of parents who have children that are currently under the jurisdiction of ORR?
7. How does ORR ensure the health and safety of children that are placed within its care?
8. How long does it take for children that are separated from their biological parents to be reunited?
9. How many children under the jurisdiction of ORR that are based in Colorado have had their biological parents removed and the children remain in the care of ORR or were transferred to the foster care system?

The safety and well-being of children that are unnecessarily being separated from their families is paramount. The Administration is putting thousands of children at risk of long-term trauma, in addition to potential physical harm, by separating them from their biological parents and should cease pursuing a policy only intended to harm vulnerable migrant families.

Please provide written responses to the questions listed above within the next 30 days. You may contact Tom Clancy (tom.clancy@mail.house.gov) or Jorge Loweree (Jorge.loweree@mail.house.gov) with my office.

Sincerely,



Jared Polis
Member of Congress