



**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**

**Bill Shuster**  
Chairman

Washington, DC 20515

**Nick J. Rahall, III**  
Ranking Member

June 16, 2014

Christopher P. Bertram, Staff Director

James H. Zola, Democrat Staff Director

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write regarding your administration's response to the growing crisis of children amassing in increasing numbers along the southern border of the United States. As a father and grandfather, I am very disturbed by the phenomenon of children being left in the hope that they will be taken in by the United States. This is undoubtedly a serious humanitarian situation and we must, as a nation, focus on the needs of these children. Likewise, as Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management, I must take an interest in the proposed involvement of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in your plans to address the situation.

On Monday, June 2, 2014 your administration announced the formation of an interagency group to deal with the increasing numbers of minors crossing the United States-Mexico border unaccompanied by adults. You and Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson designated the FEMA Administrator as the coordinator of the transportation, housing and care of these children. As subcommittee chairman, it is not clear to me that FEMA is the most appropriate and capable organization in the federal government to meet the needs of these children, especially considering that Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Health and Human Services Administration bear clear legal responsibility.

I have a number of questions regarding the participants, roles, functions, and duration of this interagency group. I ask that the Administration provide the following additional information, in writing:

- It appears that FEMA and the Unified Coordination Group is providing the short term solution. What are the specific roles and activities FEMA is to perform and how long do we expect them to continue? How many FEMA employees will be involved? What are the cost estimates associated with these activities? Under what authority is FEMA performing these activities? Are any of these activities being reimbursed?

- What are the roles of other agencies involved, including authorities, number of employees and estimated costs? Are those efforts being reimbursed by FEMA or any other entity or are those costs being absorbed by the respective agencies?
- How long will it take to address the immediate crisis? What are the intermediate and long term plans for dealing with the unaccompanied minors that are here and continue to arrive? What is being done in the intermediate and long term to address the underlying issues driving the increase in unaccompanied minors crossing the border?
- How many individuals are crossing the border and at what locations? Where are they being taken and how are they being housed in the short and intermediate term? What are the estimated costs and responsible parties for those costs?
- Will any of these activities be funded out of the Disaster Relief Fund? Will you declare an emergency under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, similar to the Mariel Boat Lift response in 1980?

It is heartbreaking to think of the anguish their parents and families must have gone through before arriving at the decision to abandon them to an uncertain fate. Of grave concern is that this new practice of dumping children at the border exposes them to human traffickers, who no doubt have noticed a new crop of candidates to be sold into the sex trade or slavery. The prospects are alarming.

It appears that numerous agencies' capabilities and resources will need to be coordinated to address this issue. I look forward to your response to my questions and an explanation of how FEMA is the most appropriate leader of the government's efforts to ensure the well-being of these unaccompanied children.

Very truly yours,



Lou Barletta  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public  
Buildings, and Emergency Management