

LOU BARLETTA
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INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

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COMMITTEE

HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3811

July 17, 2014

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE:
115 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6511 PHONE
(855) 241-5144 TOLL-FREE
(202) 226-6260 FAX

HAZLETON, PA OFFICE:
1 SOUTH CHURCH STREET, SUITE 100
HAZLETON, PA 18201
(570) 751-0050 PHONE
(570) 751-0054 FAX

SUNBURY, PA OFFICE:
106 ARCH STREET
SUNBURY, PA 17801
(570) 988-7801 PHONE
(570) 988-7805 FAX

CARLISLE, PA OFFICE:
59 WEST LOUTHER STREET
CARLISLE, PA 17013
(717) 249-0190 PHONE
(717) 218-0190 FAX

HARRISBURG, PA OFFICE:
4813 JONESTOWN ROAD, SUITE 101
HARRISBURG, PA 17109
(717) 626-7002 PHONE
(717) 695-6794 FAX

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretaries Burwell and Johnson:

I write regarding the continuing and increasing phenomenon of unaccompanied alien minors flooding across the border between the United States and Mexico. As you know, many tens of thousands of minors have already crossed, with as many as 150,000 more expected by next year. While it is my hope that most will be returned to their countries of origin, there is great concern about their housing in the interim.

In late June, I raised concerns about plans for a housing facility for unaccompanied alien minors to be located in the former MinSec Center in Hazleton, Pennsylvania. The organization evaluating the facility, the non-profit U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants, subsequently withdrew its interest in Hazleton, citing general opposition from the community. I subsequently discussed this issue with Texas Governor Rick Perry during a House Homeland Security Field Hearing in McAllen, Texas. Governor Perry agreed with me that the federal government is not being honest with the states regarding how thoroughly authorities are examining incoming minors.

I have already read a number of news reports indicating other governors share these concerns. For instance, Governor Dave Heineman of Nebraska recently indicated to reporters that federal officials refuse to provide him with information regarding the names and location of roughly 200 unaccompanied alien minors sent to his state without any notice. Similarly, Governor Mary Fallin of Oklahoma reportedly found out through media outlets – rather than through one of your agencies – that her state would be receiving hundreds of unaccompanied alien minors.

Communities across the country, but particularly Pennsylvanians, deserve to know if the federal government is planning to move hundreds of individuals into a community. This could impact our schools and health systems, as well as our public safety. It is unclear how many may have ties to gangs, drug cartels, or other terrorist organizations since the federal government is

relying on these individuals to self-identify. Border Patrol agents have already reported several instances of known gang members being released into the interior of the country. Adding to the threat, according to internal DHS figures, roughly 75 percent of the unaccompanied alien minors who have entered the country since October self-identify as 14-17 year-olds, and roughly 70 percent of them are male.

I therefore am formally requesting information on any and all facilities planned for the housing of unaccompanied alien minors or parents with children in the State of Pennsylvania. Please provide me with responses to the following questions:

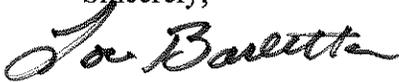
- 1) Are unaccompanied alien minors or parents with children being sent to Pennsylvania?
- 2) If unaccompanied alien minors or parents with children are being sent to Pennsylvania, where are they being housed?
- 3) If unaccompanied alien minors and parents with children are being sent to Pennsylvania, how long will they stay and where will they go after their stay has ended?
- 4) If no unaccompanied alien minors or parents with children are currently being sent to Pennsylvania, does your agency have plans to send any to Pennsylvania in the future?
- 5) Is your agency considering building any new, or renovating any current facilities, to house unaccompanied alien minors or parents with children? If so, where?
- 6) How many unaccompanied alien minors have your agencies sent to Pennsylvania so far and how many will be sent by the end of this fiscal year?
 - a. What is the average age of unaccompanied alien minors sent to Pennsylvania?
 - b. What is their country of origin?
- 7) How many parents with children have your agencies sent to Pennsylvania so far and how many will be sent by the end of this fiscal year?
 - a. Please include both the number of adults and children.
 - b. What is their country of origin?
- 8) What type of health screenings are being conducted on unaccompanied alien minors and parents with children?
 - a. What types of illnesses do you screen for?
 - b. How will you prove to communities that the individuals you send to them will not pose a public health risk?
 - c. What do you do with those who test positive?
 - d. Who is responsible for paying for any medical expenses?
- 9) What impact will sending unaccompanied alien minors and parents with children have on Pennsylvania's hospitals and health care system? How will you ensure that communities will not suffer from increased wait times or that their ability to receive health care will not otherwise be negatively impacted?
- 10) What impact will sending unaccompanied alien minors and parents with children have on Pennsylvania's schools and educational system? Who will pay for them to enter Pennsylvania schools and how will you ensure communities that their students' ability to receive a quality education will not suffer?
- 11) Does DHS or HHS conduct background checks on unaccompanied alien minors or parents with children before releasing them from custody?
 - a. Does this background check include an investigation of criminal records in the alien's country of origin?

- b. Does this background check include an investigation of juvenile criminal records?
- 12) What kind of screening does DHS and HHS do to ensure gang members are not being released into our communities?

This information is vitally important to my constituents and the people of Pennsylvania, as the receipt of unaccompanied alien minors and parents with children would no doubt impact taxpayers as they enter our educational and health systems. The impact this would have on Pennsylvanians' public safety is also unknown, as Border Patrol agents continue to report on gang members crossing the border and taking advantage of the current influx. Further, your agencies should provide communities with sufficient notice and a 30-day comment period before bringing recent border crossers to their neighborhoods.

I look forward to receiving your prompt reply, and request a response by July 31. Please direct your response to Sarah Dansereau of my Washington, D.C. office, who may be reached by phone at (202) 225-6511 or sarah.dansereau@mail.house.gov. Instead of stonewalling state and local lawmakers, the federal government should be providing them with answers to these and other critically important questions.

Sincerely,



Lou Barletta
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable W. Craig Fugate, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Administrator