

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 5, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

We write concerning an alarming report by a federal employee whistleblower that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is knowingly transferring unaccompanied migrant children in the custody of criminals, including sex traffickers. If these claims are true, this is pure evil being committed by your agency. This cannot be swept under the rug; the American public must know the truth about what is happening to these victims of the Biden Administration's inhumane open border policies.

On November 29, 2022, Project Veritas released a video of its interview with Tara Lee Rodas, an employee at the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) who was formerly detailed with HHS at the Emergency Intake Site in Pomona, California.¹ In just a 12-minute video, Ms. Rodas asserted several disturbing claims regarding the Unaccompanied Children Program and HHS's failure to ensure children in the program are transported to safe, non-criminal sponsors, including:

- “It’s just strange that HHS knows there’s a lot of children going to one area, and yet they’re not doing anything to say ‘there’s going to be a mandatory home study before we send one more child here.’”
- “[The Biden Administration] relaxed a lot of the stringent vetting by creating these additional field guidances, and there’s a focus on ‘move the children’ as opposed to ‘place children in safe homes.’ Right now, it is speed over safety.”
- “HHS does not want federal law enforcement going after their sponsors in any way.”
- “Our sponsors typically are not citizens; they are not permanent residents. They don’t have legal presence.”
- “[Most people] have no idea that children are going to unrelated people. That children are definitely—we have proof, evidence—that they are being recruited and transported. They are then in debt bondage.”

¹ Project Veritas, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Whistleblower Reveals “Tax Dollars” Spent to “Put Children in the Hands of Criminals”; Says Gov’t Complicit Because “We Don’t Get Sued by Traffickers”...Migrant Child: My Female Sponsor “Would Pimp Me to Men,” Nov. 29, 2022, *available at* <https://www.projectveritas.com/news/u-s-department-of-health-and-human-services-whistleblower-reveals-tax/>.

- “We know that children have been trafficked through the [Unaccompanied Children] program.”
- “Once the children are gone to the sponsor, there’s nothing we can do about it. There’s nothing that HHS can do.”
- “We are paying to put children in the hands of criminals.”

The most reprehensible claim by Ms. Rodas occurred when she raised concerns to command center executives about placing another unaccompanied child in a questionable home. According to Ms. Rodas, someone told her, “I think you need to understand we only get sued if we keep kids in care too long. We don’t get sued by traffickers. Are you clear? We don’t get sued by traffickers.”

Ms. Rodas encouraged HHS employees or others with knowledge of this information to come forward, and we strongly agree. We beg individuals to shed light on the extent to which the federal government may be complicit, or even providing material support, to human traffickers. We also assert to you that such information would be protected disclosures, and federal whistleblower laws prohibits any retaliation against individuals for making these disclosures, regardless of whether they are made within HHS, to the HHS Inspector General (IG), to the Government Accountability Office, to another agency or agency IG, to CIGIE, or to Congress. This includes Ms. Rodas, who believes she was retaliated against for raising concerns about the Unaccompanied Children Program.

We have long known that the Biden Administration’s open border policies are fueling human trafficking and child sex trafficking, as migrants repay debts to the cartels who transport them to illegally cross the border. We have repeatedly pressed HHS and the Department of Homeland Security for information on what the federal government is doing to ensure we are not facilitating the cartels’ trafficking operations. It is infuriating that, according to Ms. Rodas, HHS is doing nothing to protect these vulnerable individuals and shows indifference in its knowledge that it hands children over to criminals for exploitation.

It is unbelievable that we must write this, but it is necessary in light of Ms. Rodas’s whistleblowing: Stop sending unaccompanied children to homes with unrelated adults and criminals. We also request the following information about Ms. Rodas’s whistleblower claims:

- 1) Please provide specific responses to Ms. Rodas’s allegations detailed in her quotes above.
- 2) Please provide all guidance issued to HHS intake sites on vetting sponsors for unaccompanied children.
- 3) Please provide the HHS policy for when a single individual sponsors multiple unrelated unaccompanied children.
- 3) Please explain what information about sponsors is collected and monitored by HHS, including addresses and number of children sponsored.
- 4) Please provide the HHS policy for when HHS suspects or knows a sponsor provided false information or otherwise committed fraud in order to sponsor an unaccompanied child.

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5) Please provide the HHS policy for when an unaccompanied child reports to HHS, an immigration court, or other government official that the sponsor is forcing the child to engage in unlawful labor practices, sexual acts, or other criminal actions.

6) Please provide the number and types of referrals HHS has made to federal, state, or local law enforcement for a sponsor providing fraudulent information to HHS, engaging in criminal activities while sponsoring an unaccompanied child, including trafficking or other offenses in which a sponsor exploited the child.

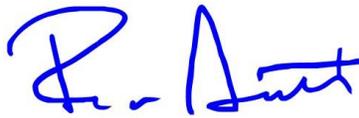
Please provide this information no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, December 19, 2022. Please contact Brandon Palumbo in my office at brandon_palumbo@ronjohnson.senate.gov if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
United States Senator



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Josh Hawley
United States Senator



Mike Braun
United States Senator



Ted Cruz
United States Senator