



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 12, 2024

Ms. Robin Dunn Marcos
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Humanitarian Services
Director, Office of Refugee Resettlement
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Deputy Assistant Secretary Dunn Marcos,

The Committee on Homeland Security (Committee) is conducting oversight of the Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) capabilities of screening potential sponsors of unaccompanied alien children (UACs). UACs remain highly vulnerable to human trafficking, and many are placed into the hands of human smugglers and cartel members in their journey to illegally cross the Southwest border.

The statistics and data surrounding UACs is extremely disconcerting. In February 2023, media reported that over 85,000 UACs processed by ORR in a two-year timeframe were unable to be contacted.¹ Reported as "lost," these youth represent a growing humanitarian crisis. From February 2021 through June 2024, over 500,000 UACs were encountered by U.S. Customs and Border Protection along the Southwest border.² From October 2020 through June 2024, ORR released over 430,000 UACs to sponsors.³ As record numbers of UACs are encountered, media reported the correlating and devastating reality of child labor exploitation UACs are subjected to in the United States. The sheer number of UACs encountered and subsequently released to sponsors and the inability to contact these "lost" and severely vulnerable children, the Committee finds imperative to examine ORR's screening capabilities for both children and sponsors. Additionally, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) released multiple reports highlighting the lack of thorough vetting of sponsors and failure to follow up with children placed with sponsors,⁴ and many concerns remain.

¹ Hannah Dreier, *Alone and Exploited, Migrant Children Work Brutal Jobs Across the U.S.*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, Feb. 25, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/25/us/unaccompanied-migrant-child-workers-exploitation.html>.

² *Southwest Land Border Encounters*, U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters> (last visited July 30, 2024).

³ *Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by State*, OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state> (last visited July 30, 2024).

⁴ OFF. OF THE INSPECTOR GEN., U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, *Operational Challenges Within ORR and the ORR Emergency Intake Site at Fort Bliss Hindered Case Management for Children*, OEI-07-21-00251, Sept. 21, 2022, <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/OEI-07-21-00251.pdf>; OFF. OF THE INSPECTOR GEN., U.S. DEP'T OF

To assist the Committee with its oversight of ORR's sponsor screening and UAC follow-up, please provide the following documents and information from January 2021 through present, as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 PM on August 26, 2024:

1. Documents sufficient to show the monthly ORR denial rate for potential UAC sponsors;
2. Documents sufficient to show the monthly number of UACs placed with sponsors who ORR was subsequently unable to establish communication with through follow-up attempts;
3. Documents sufficient to show the monthly number of Category 4 (No sponsored identified) UACs as defined Section 2.2.1 of ORR Unaccompanied Children Program Policy Guide⁵ discharged;
4. Documents sufficient to show the monthly number of UACs placed with sponsors who have been charged with or convicted of any crime or investigated for the physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or abandonment of a child;
5. Documents sufficient to show the number of identified potential sponsors who have provided false information in the application of release and/or accompanying documents or submitted fraudulent documents for the purposes of obtaining sponsorship of a UAC; and
6. Documents sufficient to explain ORR's actions after unsuccessful attempts to establish communication with sponsors through follow-up attempts.

An attachment contains instructions for responding to this request. Please contact the Committee on Homeland Security Majority staff at (202) 226-8417 with any questions about this request.

Per Rule X of the U.S House of Representatives, the Committee on Homeland Security is the principal committee of jurisdiction for overall homeland security policy and has special oversight functions of "all Government activities relating to homeland security, including the interaction of all departments and agencies with the Department of Homeland Security."

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, *Gaps in Sponsor Screening and Followup Raise Safety Concerns for Unaccompanied Children*, OEI-07-21-00250, February 15, 2024, <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/OEI-07-21-00250.pdf>.

⁵ OFF. OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, *ORR Unaccompanied Children Program Policy Guide: Section 2*, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/policy-guidance/unaccompanied-children-program-policy-guide-section-2>, (last visited Jul. 24, 2024).

Respectfully,



MARK E. GREEN, M.D.
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



CLAY HIGGINS
Chairman
Subcommittee on Border Security
and Enforcement



DAN BISHOP
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations,
and Accountability

Encl.

cc: The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Lou Correa, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement

The Honorable Glenn Ivey
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability