

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-4320**

July 19, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
300 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20024

The Honorable Alex M. Azar, II  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
330 C Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20416

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Secretary Azar:

Since President Trump instituted a zero tolerance prosecution policy in April that led to the separation of approximately 3,000 children from their parents. The President subsequently signed an executive order on June 20<sup>th</sup> entitled "Affording Congress an Opportunity to Address Family Separation" ostensibly directing that immigrant parents and children remain detained together for the pendency of criminal and immigration proceedings. Notably, the President did not terminate the zero tolerance policy. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, Judge Dána Sabraw of the United States District Court for the Southern District of California issued a preliminary injunction barring separation of migrant children from the parents and requiring the Administration to reunite these families under a specific timetable. My colleagues and I in Congress have written the Administration multiple times to get more information on the wellbeing of these children and understand the government's reunification plans based on these developments.

On June 26<sup>th</sup>, I joined Congressional Hispanic Caucus Chairwoman Michelle Lujan Grisham, Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer, and other Congressional Hispanic Caucus members requesting information from the Departments of Justice (DOJ), Homeland Security (DHS) and Health and Human Services (HHS) on the well-being of these separated children. Specific questions included, how many children have been afforded legal assistance, how many children have received trauma care or other counseling, how many children remain in DHS or HHS custody, and a detailed plan for reuniting these children. We still have not received a response.

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, I joined Reps. Jared Polis and Donald S. Beyer, Jr. and 79 other members of Congress demanding a meeting with several agencies to get answers about what is being done to reunify migrant children and parents, and understand the coordination between. We still have not received a response.

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, I led a Congressional Hispanic Caucus letter to Secretary Mattis asking for more information on reports that the Pentagon was considering military bases to house migrant families. We still have not received a response.

On June 28<sup>th</sup>, I joined Rep. Suzanne Bonamici and 78 other members of Congress to demand agencies quickly comply with Judge Sabraw's ruling to reunite families separated at the border. Specific questions included, what tracking system is in place to locate children in the government's custody and what information is provided to parents to keep them apprised of their children's whereabouts. We still have not received a response.

In light of your silence, the family separation and reunification process remains a mystery. Members of Congress still do not know how the government tracks these children and families, the specific details under which the government intends to meet the upcoming July 26<sup>th</sup> deadline to return as many as 2,551 children that remain separated from their loved ones, or what will happen to the families once they are reunited.

In addition to the pending questions above, an overarching query remains. Can you represent to the American people that each child who has been entrusted to the care of the government has not died or been seriously injured? Reports indicate that at least two adults have committed suicide in DHS custody since the implementation of the zero tolerance policy. Congress must ensure that all individuals in your care are safe, especially children who are the most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "JOAQUIN CASTRO". The signature is stylized with a large, circular flourish at the beginning.

Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress