

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 11, 2018

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

We write today to express our deep concern over the matter of your testimony before the Senate Committee on Finance on June 26, 2018, and to urge you to clarify basic information regarding your Department's care of children separated from their parents under the Trump Administration's family separation policy.

As a result of President Trump's family separation policy, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) has taken custody of thousands of children who have been removed from their parents at the Southern border. We are alarmed by the serious and potentially irreparable harm inflicted on these children and their parents due to the family separation policy. Since the Trump Administration enacted this policy, we have made numerous inquiries seeking simple facts about the number and location of separated children in HHS custody, the physical and mental health care provided to separated children, the conditions and plans for reunifying them with their parents, and HHS policies and procedures moving forward. We have received very little, and at times conflicting, information from the Trump Administration. We were therefore eager to hear from you publicly about HHS' activities.

On June 26, 2018, you testified before the Senate Committee on Finance, during which time you made statements regarding HHS' activities under the Trump Administration's family separation policy that conflict with subsequent information shared with Congress and the general public. You testified that, "every parent has access to know where their child is," and, regarding the location of a separated child, "that information is available to every parent." You further testified that "there is no reason why any parent would not know where their child is located," and that "we now have 2,047" separated children in HHS custody.

However, according to a July 2, 2018, *Politico* article, following your testimony you "called for volunteers to review the case files of each of the roughly 11,900 children in custody to determine whether HHS missed any who had been separated from adults at the border," suggesting that you were uncertain about the statements you made to the Finance Committee. Indeed, on July 5, 2018, you stated on a conference call with reporters that up to "3,000" – not 2,047 – separated children are in HHS custody. Moreover, as documented in numerous reports from media outlets, immigration advocates, and attorneys, many parents of separated children still do not know where their children are, and their attempts to contact them have been unsuccessful.

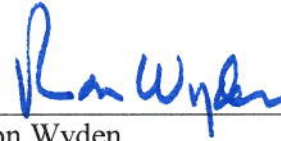
These inconsistent answers and the continued lack of a clear plan for the care and reunification of separated children show a glaring lack of leadership. Given your assurances during the Finance Committee hearing that you are doing everything possible to address these concerns, we are disturbed that ORR continues to be led by Scott Lloyd. We have no confidence in the leadership of Mr. Lloyd, who has little to no background in refugee resettlement, has not made a single public statement regarding this crisis under his leadership, and is instead known as an anti-abortion crusader.

The public, international community, and separated families in particular deserve a clear and humanitarian plan, competent leadership, truthful answers, and an accurate understanding of what your Department is doing to care for and reunify children separated from their families. Accordingly, we urge you to replace Scott Lloyd with a capable and experienced director or acting director and return to Congress as soon as possible to accurately and comprehensively describe HHS' process for serving separated children and their families.

Sincerely,



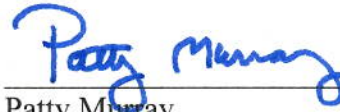
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator

cc:

Senator Orrin G. Hatch, Chairman, Committee on Finance

Senator Charles E. Grassley, Chairman, Committee on Judiciary

Senator Lamar Alexander, Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions