

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1304

July 17, 2018

David Sinski
Executive Director and Vice President
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights
208 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 1300
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Dear Mr. Sinski:

I write today in regard to a troubling story that appeared in *The Washington Post* on July 15, 2018. The article details a number of disturbing allegations made by children who were recently cared for at Casa Guadalupe, a Chicago shelter run by the Heartland Alliance, after being separated from their parents as a result of President Trump's "zero tolerance" child separation policy.

The article includes on-the-record accounts from numerous children, including some as young as nine years old, who are alleging physical and emotional abuse while in the care of Heartland. One child recounted being "dragged" off a soccer field by two adult male shelter employees. One child said he was denied basic medical care after falling and fracturing his arm on the basketball court. Another child noted that he was separated from his own sister. And, finally, multiple children reported watching shelter employees inject unknown substances into a child. These are serious and distressing allegations.

At my request, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) has opened an investigation into implementation of the family separation policy and I have asked the HHS OIG to address these allegations about Heartland in their investigation. I also urge Heartland to look into these allegations and take immediate steps to determine what happened, who was responsible, and to ensure that nothing like this happens to any child in the care of an HHS contracted facility. Children separated from their families at our Southern border as a result of President Trump's unlawful and heartless policy have already endured far more trauma than any child should ever be forced to endure. Every effort must be made to ensure that, once in the care of HHS grantees like Heartland, these children are compassionately cared for—both physically and emotionally.

I am distressed at the allegations made by children in *The Washington Post* article and request that you notify me as soon as possible whether these accounts are accurate, what steps Heartland will take to hold the alleged perpetrators accountable, and how Heartland will work to ensure that nothing like this ever happens again.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator