

VERONICA ESCOBAR
16TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

ASSISTANT WHIP

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM,
AND HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
MILITARY PERSONNEL, VICE CHAIR

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CYBER, INNOVATIVE
TECHNOLOGIES, AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE
ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS



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VICE CHAIR
DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS
DEPUTY WHIP
CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS
CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS
NEW DEMOCRAT COALITION

August 4, 2021

Secretary Xavier Becerra
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Christi Grimm
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Inspector General
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra and Inspector General Grimm:

We write to you today to express our immense concern and horror at the whistleblower allegations that surfaced over the weekend of [sexual misconduct at the Fort Bliss Emergency Intake Site \(EIS\)](#) in El Paso, Texas. Audio provided by whistleblowers appears to confirm that adult staff at Ft. Bliss had been caught in sexually inappropriate situations with minors in their care at least as recently as May 2021.

This is inexcusable.

We urge the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General (HHS, OIG) to immediately launch an investigation into the allegations and investigate any and all contractors, subcontractors, case workers, and service providers who are, or were at one point, present at the Ft. Bliss EIS.

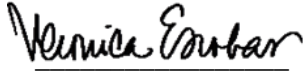
This disturbing and wholly indefensible development is the latest in a string of critical shortcomings by the Department of Health and Human Services and the contractors they have chosen to care for the unaccompanied minors at the Ft. Bliss EIS. Over the course of being operational, Ft. Bliss has seen unaccompanied minors held for weeks and sometimes months without updates on the status of their reunification cases, a lack of mental and emotional health services, and a continued lack of access to clean clothes, underwear, and shoes for minors.

Congresswoman Escobar, who represents the TX-16 Congressional District that includes the Ft. Bliss EIS, and her staff, engaged directly with Secretary Becerra and Ft. Bliss EIS staff about their concerns across multiple visits to the site. After numerous attempts calling for change over several months, the EIS remains dangerously mismanaged.

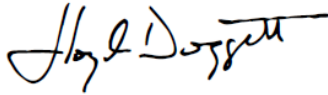
We demand HHS OIG take immediate action to investigate claims of sexual misconduct by Ft. Bliss staff toward unaccompanied children at the site and hold the perpetrators, and those responsible for enabling them, accountable to the fullest extent possible. Furthermore, we ask to be notified if any former Ft. Bliss staff under investigation have been transferred to other facilities or Emergency Intake Sites, particularly any locations involved in the care of minors.

We look forward to your detailed response regarding how the Department intends to handle the investigation into these allegations.

Sincerely,



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



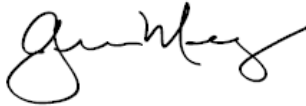
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



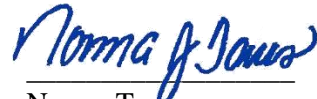
Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress



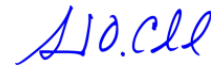
Rosa DeLauro
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Mark Pocan
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Sheila Jackson Lee
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Jerrold Nadler
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Jason Crow
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