Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2026

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20201

Angie Salazar
Acting Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement
330 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20201

Secretary Kennedy and Acting Director Salazar:

We are writing with urgent concerns regarding recent reporting[1] that the Department of Justice (DOJ) requested the Texas Indigent Defense Commission's (TIDC) assistance providing legal services to unaccompanied immigrant children. We, along with legal service providers and advocates who work extensively with unaccompanied minors, are concerned that the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which is under the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), may be preparing to relocate unaccompanied minors to the State of Texas, potentially to speed up removals of unaccompanied minors.

The administration's outreach to the Texas Office of the Attorney General and TIDC – in conjunction with the loss of ORR beds in other states[2] while ORR bed capacity in Texas remains available – could signal impending plans to relocate unaccompanied minors from across the country to ORR facilities in Texas and we fear it may indicate plans for imminent mass removals of vulnerable children. This would not be the first time the administration attempted to rapidly remove unaccompanied minors from the United States; over Labor Day weekend last year, the administration tried to remove unaccompanied minors from the United States from Harlingen, Texas in the middle of the night[3].

According to the Acacia Center for Justice, which currently holds the federal contract for multiple legal service providers across the country, over 20,000 unaccompanied children in the U.S. currently have legal representation. The Acacia's Center federal contract ends on July 31st, and the administration has yet to provide guidance on how ongoing cases will be handled or transferred once the contract ends. Relocating vulnerable minors abruptly to Texas would only result in separating them from their lawyers and critical support systems, while sending them alone to a state that no longer provides oversight of childcare facilities for immigrant children. This would result in an alarming number of children potentially having no representation at an immigration hearing or feeling pressured to voluntarily depart the country.

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[1] Trump admin asks Texas for legal help representing immigrant kids
[2] NY's Beds for Unaccompanied Minors Evaporate as Feds End Contracts
[3] Senator warns Trump plans to deport over 500 immigrant children | AP News

It is equally concerning that the administration is making efforts to reach out to TIDC for assistance with legal services for unaccompanied minors, while at the same time failing to pay legal service providers across the country, including in Texas, that are currently representing unaccompanied minors. One such provider, Estrella del Paso, has not received up to $765,000 in federal payments and is facing closure after 40 years of service to the El Paso, Texas community[4].

Furthermore, it remains unclear if TIDC is legally allowed to provide services to unaccompanied minors. Per their mandate, TIDC currently supports legal services to low-income Texans for criminal indigent defense; the mandate does not provide for legal immigration services for unaccompanied minors. While the State legislature may amend their mandate if necessary, TIDC currently does not provide funding assistance for immigration-related work and would likely not be prepared to take over assistance for legal services once the federal contract with the Acacia Center expires on July 31st, which raises further concerns about children's ongoing legal cases.

We urge you to respond to the following questions by July 23, 2026:

1. Does the administration currently have plans in place to relocate unaccompanied minors to the State of Texas?
    a. If so, what is the timeline associated with these relocations?
2. What plan does the administration have for the ongoing legal cases of unaccompanied minors that will be impacted once the federal contract for legal services expires on July 31st?
3. What guidance has the administration provided to legal service providers who are currently representing unaccompanied minors regarding their ongoing cases and next steps?
    a. If the administration has provided no guidance, please explain why.
    b. Does the administration plan to provide this guidance before July 31st?
4. When is the administration planning to release the belated payments to legal service providers, as it is currently required to by court order[5]?

The wellbeing of the unaccompanied minors currently in the care of the Federal government and who have pending immigration cases must be prioritized, and we strongly reject any actions that would undermine their access to counsel or expedite their unprecedented removal. We urge the administration to strongly reconsider relocating minors away from their current homes, legal representation, and support systems, and to release the overdue funds to the legal service providers that are already providing these children with the legal representation they not only need, but are legally required to receive.

Sincerely,

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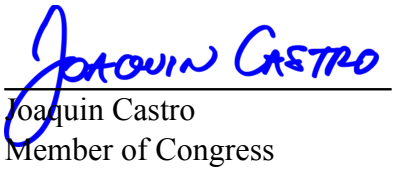
[4] El Paso immigrant legal aid provider says Trump administration is ignoring a court order, pushing nonprofit to brink - El Paso Matters

[5] Federal judge orders Trump administration to restore legal aid for undocumented children | Courthouse News Service

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Greg Casar
Member of Congress



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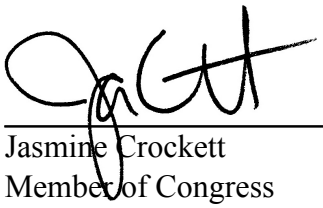
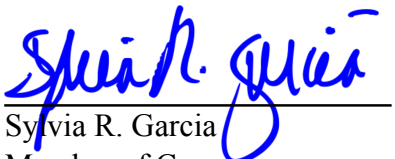


Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
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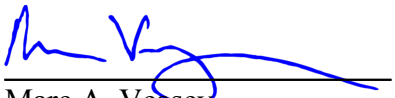

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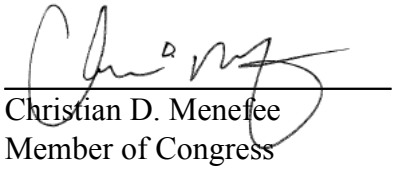

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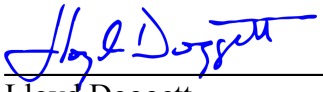

Lloyd Doggett
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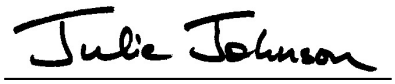
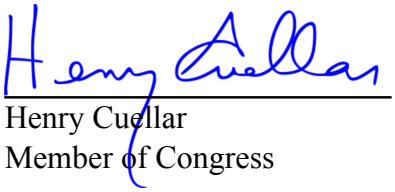


Julie Johnson
Member of Congress



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