

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 29, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 2020

Dear Secretary Becerra,

We are writing to make you aware of the heartbreaking conditions that children are being subjected to in federal facilities at the southern border. As we recently observed, these conditions are threatening the health and safety of migrant children and cannot be tolerated. We are facing a crisis at the border, and it is imperative that you take immediate action to address the inhumane conditions under which these children are currently being housed.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has the responsibility to plan for and provide shelter to Unaccompanied Children (UC). The failure to do so has overwhelmed Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agents and the facilities at which these children are initially housed and processed. For example, at the CBP facility in Donna, Texas, we witnessed cruel and overcrowded conditions. Due to limited HHS resources and the surge in illegal border crossings, children are held in CBP custody for longer than the legally allowed time frame of 3 days. The enclosed spaces, called “pods,” are meant for 33 children but are currently holding as many as 600. For safety, the sleep area is lit with exceptionally bright lights 24/7. This fluorescent lighting, however, adds stress and prevents these children from getting an adequate amount of sleep. These children are also being huddled together with minimal or no COVID-19 screening and without the possibility of preventive social distancing. Additionally, they are only permitted 30 minutes a day outside in an enclosed yard. These conditions are cruel and harsh, and could potentially lead to a COVID-19 super-spreader event.

To address the urgent overflow needs at migrant facilities, approximately 40% of CBP law enforcement have been diverted to assist with child care and are unable to accomplish their primary responsibility of securing the border. CBP encountered 18,890 unaccompanied children in March alone, and federal officials estimate they will take an even greater number of children into custody in April. There is no end in sight to the surge in migrant crossings, and we can anticipate that children’s health and safety will remain at risk as conditions will only worsen.

The journey to the United States is often traumatizing for young children, especially for those smuggled by criminals and human traffickers. It is heartbreaking that these children are further

traumatized and held in such inhumane conditions in America – waiting days or months in overcrowded shelters. Every day that goes by without securing the border is another day that children are trafficked, taken advantage of, or abused. We urge you to take decisive action to move these children rapidly out of CPB custody and into age appropriate facilities as required by law and address these increasingly dangerous and stressful conditions at the border.

Sincerely,



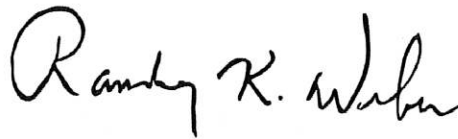
Kevin Brady  
Member of Congress



Michael C. Burgess, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Brian Babin, D.D.S.  
Member of Congress



Randy Weber  
Member of Congress



Ronny L. Jackson  
Member of Congress



Louie Gohmert  
Member of Congress



Jodey Arrington  
Member of Congress



John R. Carter  
Member of Congress



Beth Van Duyne  
Member of Congress



Troy Nehls  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pat Fallon', with a large, stylized initial 'P'.

Pat Fallon  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pete Sessions', with a large, stylized initial 'P'.

Pete Sessions  
Member of Congress