



NEWS

North Carolina city could be next to house unaccompanied migrant children

by Anna Giaritelli, Homeland Security Reporter | May 07, 2021 02:08 PM

GREENSBORO, North Carolina — The Biden administration is in talks with city officials in Greensboro to open an overflow shelter that would hold hundreds of unaccompanied migrant children who have come across the southern border, according to the city.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is eyeing the American Hebrew Academy, a shuttered international boarding school, as its next site to hold up to 800 children, city officials revealed.

“On Tuesday, May 4, both City and County officials met with representatives from the US Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a site assessment of the American Hebrew Academy facility at 4334 Hobbs Rd. The facility is one of several sites across the country identified as unused property for potential use as a temporary influx housing for unaccompanied children,” the city of Greensboro said in a statement on Thursday.

The city said it did not initiate this proposal and that the Biden administration reached out to Greensboro. The boarding school closed in 2019 due to financial troubles.

HHS has visited the Greensboro site twice in recent weeks and is not expected to announce its decision until the summer. HHS would contract medical, security, food, and other services for the site, but Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan claimed it could lead to “as many as 800 jobs” for local residents. The federal government would provide on-site security and medical needs, independent of city and county resources.

The move would make it among more than a dozen emergency facilities nationwide to hold the nearly 22,000 children in HHS custody due to the government’s shortage of existing sites. Record-high numbers of children have been showing up at the border without parents, oftentimes pushed across after self-separating from a family to take advantage of President Joe Biden's border policy enforcement.

In March 2020, the Trump administration opted not to arrest anyone who illegally crossed the border and instead turned them back so that Border Patrol stations would not become crowded with people amid the coronavirus pandemic. In February, the Biden administration chose to stop turning away children, which resulted in more than 18,000 single children showing up at the U.S.-Mexico border in March, the most recorded in a single month.

Since January, the government has spent approximately \$3 billion on costs associated with housing children who have crossed the southern border.