

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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MEMORANDUM

July 10, 2019

To: Members of the Committee on Oversight and Reform

Fr: Majority Staff

Re: Hearing on “The Trump Administration’s Child Separation Policy: Substantiated Allegations of Mistreatment”

On **Friday, July 12, 2019, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building**, the Committee will hold a hearing to examine the Trump Administration’s actions in separating thousands of children from their families at the southern border, the treatment of immigrants detained in U.S. government facilities, and other related issues.

I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Between April 2018 and June 2018, the Trump Administration separated at least 2,800 children from their parents at the southern border under the “zero tolerance” policy that Attorney General Jeff Sessions instituted in April 2018 and a related policy that DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen instituted a few weeks later to refer all parents who made unauthorized border crossings for prosecution.¹

In January 2019, the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services issued a report finding that the Trump Administration may have separated “thousands” of additional children before the zero tolerance policy went into effect.² In addition, the Trump Administration recently admitted to separating an additional 700 children from their parents at the border after June 2018.³

¹ Department of Justice, *Attorney General Sessions Delivers Remarks Discussing the Immigration Enforcement Actions of the Trump Administration* (May 7, 2018) (online at www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-sessions-delivers-remarks-discussing-immigration-enforcement-actions); *The Secretary of Homeland Security Said There Was “No Policy of Separating Families.” A Memo Proves There Was.*, Buzzfeed (Sept. 27, 2018) (online at www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adolfoflores/immigration-homeland-security-family-separation-foia-dhs).

² Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, *Separated Children Placed in Office of Refugee Resettlement Care* (Jan. 17, 2019) (online at www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-BL-18-00511.pdf).

³ *Trump Administration Still Separating Hundreds of Migrant Children at the Border Through Often Questionable Claims of Danger*, Houston Chronicle (June 22, 2019) (online at

Recent reports have identified deteriorating conditions in border facilities where children are being detained. For example, reports from the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security have highlighted overcrowded, unhealthy, and unsafe conditions in these facilities, and they have warned that these issues need to be addressed immediately to mitigate health and safety risks.⁴

Other recent reports have raised concerns about racist, sexist, and xenophobic views expressed by some Border Patrol officers regarding detained immigrants through a secret Facebook group.⁵

II. WITNESSES

Panel 1

Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-TX)

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY)

Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-MA)

Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI)

Panel 2

Jennifer L. Costello

Acting Inspector General
Department of Homeland Security

Ann Maxwell

Assistant Inspector General for Evaluation and Inspections
Department of Health and Human Services

Elora Mukherjee

Jerome L. Greene Clinical Professor of Law
Columbia Law School

www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Trump-administration-still-separating-hundreds-of-14029494.php

⁴ Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, *Management Alert—DHS Needs to Address Dangerous Overcrowding and Prolonged Detention of Children and Adults in the Rio Grande Valley* (July 2, 2019) (online at www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-07/OIG-19-51-Jul19_.pdf); Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, *Management Alert—DHS Needs to Address Dangerous Overcrowding Among Single Adults at El Paso Del Norte Processing Center* (May 30, 2019) (online at www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-05/OIG-19-46-May19.pdf).

⁵ *Inside the Secret Border Patrol Facebook Group Where Agents Joke About Migrant Deaths and Post Sexist Memes*, ProPublica (July 1, 2019) (online at www.propublica.org/article/secret-border-patrol-facebook-group-agents-joke-about-migrant-deaths-post-sexist-memes).

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