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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

September 20, 2016

CHRISTOPHER R. HIXON, STAFF DIRECTOR
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The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

Over the last several years, the United States has experienced a surge of illegal immigrants entering the country through our porous southwest border. Since Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, over 100,000 unaccompanied children (UACs) and a similar number of family units have arrived at the border. I am concerned that the surge appears to be spiking in recent months, with the number of people apprehended doubling or tripling from the same months in previous years.

In FY2014, we faced a humanitarian crisis at our border.¹ In all, more than 68,000 UACs and just as many family units arrived at our southwest border.² The majority of these people came from Central America, specifically Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. The Administration was forced to recognize this crisis and take steps to expedite the processing and dispersing of these children and families,³ and, in FY2015, fewer people arrived from Central America to the United States: 39,970 UACs and 39,838 family units.⁴ Unfortunately, the Administration did little to address the incentives facing migrants from Central America to illegally migrate to the United States.

By FY2016, unaccompanied children and families increasingly attempted the dangerous journey from Central America to the United States. In recent months, the problem has continued to get worse. According to DHS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) apprehended 5,068

¹ Ryan Grim, *Shocking Photos of Humanitarian Crisis on U.S. Border Emerge*, HUFFINGTON POST (Jun. 6, 2014), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/06/border-patrol-children_n_5462054.html; Brett LoGiurato, *There's a Staggering Humanitarian Crisis on the US Border, And It's Only Going to Get Worse*, BUSINESS INSIDER (Jun. 16, 2014), <http://www.businessinsider.com/immigrant-children-border-crisis-2014-6>; Amanda Sakuma, *Crisis at the Border Mounts with Surge in Unaccompanied Minors*, MSNBC (July 7, 2014), <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/health-concerns-grow-surge-unaccompanied-minors>.

² U.S. Customs and Border Protection, United States Border Patrol Southwest Family Unit Subject and Unaccompanied Alien Children Apprehensions Fiscal Year 2016, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children/fy-2016>.

³ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Letter from the President – Efforts to Address the Humanitarian Situation in the Rio Grande Valley Areas of Our Nation's Southwest Border (Jun. 30, 2014), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/30/letter-president-efforts-address-humanitarian-situation-rio-grande-valle>.

⁴ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, United States Border Patrol Southwest Family Unit Subject and Unaccompanied Alien Children Apprehensions Fiscal Year 2016, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children/fy-2016>.

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UACs and 7,574 family units in July 2016.⁵ In July 2015, CBP apprehended 4,182 UACs and 4,503 family units.⁶ Thus, comparing the same month this year to last year shows a 21 percent increase in UACs and 68 percent increase in family units. In fact, as I have warned on many occasions, apprehensions across our southwest border today are on par with FY2014 apprehensions, where the month of July saw 5,499 unaccompanied children and 7,405 family units apprehended.⁷

Alarming, the shocking increases in apprehensions we saw in July have gotten even worse in August. Nearly 6,000 unaccompanied children and more than 9,000 family units were apprehended in August. For comparison purposes, these figures reflect a doubling to tripling of the number of people apprehended in the crisis of FY2014, where in August there were 3,138 UACs and 3,296 family units apprehended.⁸

And yet, despite the shocking nature of this growing crisis, the Administration does not seem to be taking it seriously. While DHS has become more efficient at processing and dispersing people once they reach the southwest border, many children are finding themselves to be victims of this efficiency.⁹ Specifically, UACs have been forced to work in unsafe conditions, miss school, and become victims of sexual predators after being dispersed by the U.S. government throughout the country.¹⁰

In order to assist the Committee's oversight of this worsening crisis at our southwest border, I respectfully request that the Department provide the following information and material:

1. A copy of the most recent Southwest Border Threat Assessment;
2. A copy of all DHS policies, memorandums, or directives related to the release of apprehension data; and
3. A full and complete explanation of the Department's plan to address the worsening crisis at our southwest border.

Please provide this information and material as soon as possible but no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday September 26, 2016.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ S. Comm. on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs, Permanent SubComm. on Investigations, *Protecting Unaccompanied Alien Children from Trafficking and Other Abuses: The Role of the Office of Refugee Resettlement* (Jan. 28, 2016), available at <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/subcommittees/investigations/reports>.

¹⁰ *AP Investigation: Fed's Failures Imperil Migrant Children*, WASH TIMES (Jan. 25, 2016), <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/jan/25/ap-investigation-feds-failures-imperil-migrant-chi/>.

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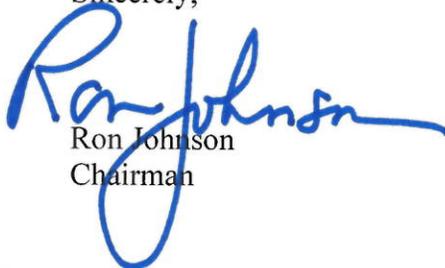
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The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized by Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate to investigate “the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of all agencies and departments of the Government.”¹¹ Additionally, S. Res. 73 (114th Congress) authorizes the Committee to examine “the efficiency and economy of all branches and functions of Government with particular references to the operations and management of Federal regulatory policies and programs.”¹² For purposes of this request, please refer to the definitions and instructions in enclosure.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Brooke Ericson of the Committee staff at (202) 224-4751. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member

Enclosure

¹¹ S. Rule XXV(k); *see also* S. Res. 445, 108th Cong. (2004).

¹² S. Res. 73 § 12, 114th Cong. (2015).