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June 19, 2014

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell:

Two years ago, President Obama announced his Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, halting deportation proceedings for certain young immigrants who illegally enter the country. As with grants of amnesty in the past, the President's executive action produced a predictable surge in children risking their lives to cross the border. Just recently, the President stated that "our future rests" on the success of people brought to the United States illegally as children, who would qualify for citizenship if Congress passes the DREAM Act.

Your agency has documented the policy's disastrous effects. In its most recent budget proposal, HHS predicted that the U.S. would capture 60,000 unaccompanied alien children (UACs) illegally entering the United States in 2014.^[1] This is an 815 percent increase from the 6,560 illegal minors caught crossing the U.S. border in 2011. In 2015, the administration estimates that the number will increase to 145,000. Recent reports indicate that 4,500 unaccompanied alien children arrived just in the month of April. More recently, border patrol agents were overwhelmed by approximately 1,200 children crossing the border in a single night.

Under the Homeland Security Act, the federal government transfers custody of illegal immigrant children to the Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The office is charged with providing temporary housing, while ultimately trying to reunite the children with a family member or legal guardian already here in the U.S. (regardless of their legal status) while the child goes through removal proceedings.

HHS recently announced a \$350 million grant opportunity to provide shelter for UACs, with funding to be directed to approximately 60 locations. According to press reports, as many as 500 UACs were to start arriving this week at St. Paul's College, a recently-closed college in Lawrenceville, Virginia. However, HHS' plans were stymied, at least temporarily, after town and county officials objected to the short notice and complete lack of community input. I am deeply concerned with HHS' lack of transparency and preparation and are requesting answers to the following questions:

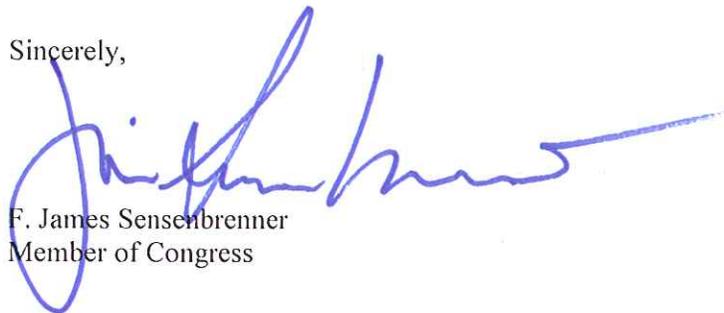
- Where is HHS currently housing UACs and for how long?
- What other sites/locations are currently planned? Have any leases been signed?
- How many immigrants do you plan to accommodate?

^[1] <http://www.hhs.gov/budget/fy2015/fy-2015-budget-in-brief.pdf>

- What do you anticipate to be the final cost of housing UACs to taxpayers?
- HHS is providing various 'family planning' services. What exactly are these services and what are the costs?
- Is HHS prepared to house the influx of immigrants inspired by the President's immigration policies?
- What plans does HHS have to inform federal, state and local leaders of UAC housing locations?

This humanitarian crisis is deeply unsettling, and is likely to get worse unless federal agencies' capabilities and resources are coordinated effectively to address this issue. I look forward to your response to these questions and an explanation of how HHS is ensuring the well-being of these unaccompanied children. Given the urgent nature of this matter, please respond no later than July 3, 2014.

Sincerely,



F. James Sensenbrenner
Member of Congress