

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Via Email:

March 20, 2020

Director Jonathan H. Hayes
Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) - Administration for Children & Families
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

CC: Scott Logan
Director, Division of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Email: scott.logan@acf.hhs.gov

Dear Director Hayes:

As you are aware, our nation is currently in the midst of a global pandemic due to coronavirus, COVID-19. We write to express our concerns regarding the treatment and care of unaccompanied minors to ensure that their health, well-being, and safety are prioritized during this crucial time, and that their rights are not violated. With this in mind, we respectfully request a response by COB March 24, 2020, if not sooner, to address the following questions:

1. Does your agency have medical practitioners on staff to provide care to minors and respond to a COVID-19 outbreak at your facilities?
2. What healthcare facilities do minors under your custody have access to?
3. What is your agency's current COVID-19 screening and medical isolation policy as minors enter and exit your system?
4. Does your agency provide guidance and education about COVID-19 when a minor enters your guardianship?
5. What are your agency's protocols and practices when a minor is diagnosed with COVID-19?
6. What are your agency's protocols and practices in response to a COVID-19 outbreak at a congregate care facility?
7. What are your agency's preventative measures to deter a COVID-19 outbreak in a congregate care facility?
8. May minors, who are residing at your agency's communal facilities, readily access hand sanitizer, soap and hot water, and face masks?
9. Is your agency reuniting children with family members, qualified sponsors, or temporary foster care as quickly as possible, while ensuring that requisite background checks are still adhered to, thereby limiting their exposure to COVID-19? If so, please provide an approximate timeframe of this process.

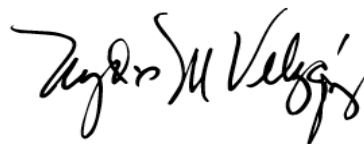
10. To limit a minor's exposure to COVID-19, is your agency prioritizing the placement of a minor in a safer space, such as a temporary foster home, instead of a congregate care facility?
11. Is your agency prioritizing the placement of a minor in a temporary foster home with less than ten (10) residents in a household in order to limit exposure to COVID-19?
12. Are temporary foster homes given guidance in responding to and preventing a COVID-19 outbreak in a private home?
13. Are home assessments conducted by your agency to ensure that there is a practice in place to prevent COVID-19 outbreak?
14. What is the protocol and practice when minors placed at a temporary foster home are diagnosed with COVID-19?
15. When minors are released from your care/guardianship by temporary foster homes or a congregate care facility, do they have immediate access to medical care?
16. Is access to educational classes currently suspended at your agency's shelters? If so, are minors engaged in remote learning or e-classes? Are they provided with laptops and resources to do so?
17. If placed within a facility with congregate care, are minors also provided extracurricular activities that allow for social distancing?

During these urgent times of a national public health crisis, we urge ORR to: prioritize the testing of minors who might have been exposed to COVID-19 or are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms; adhere to the guidelines of public health officials; and refrain from placing minors in facilities with congregate care that are located in high-risk geographical locations which may enable the proliferation of COVID-19 in communal spaces. Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your response. Given the rapidly evolving nature of this virus, we request your response no later than March 24, 2020, if not sooner. Furthermore, we welcome a briefing with our staff.

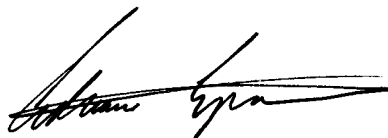
Sincerely,



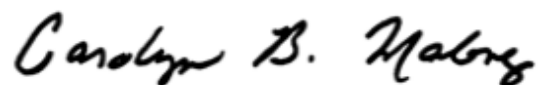
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Rep. Adriano Espaillat (NY-13)



Rep. Carolyn Maloney (NY-12)

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