

United States Senate

November 21, 2019

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016

The Honorable Mark A. Morgan
Acting Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Acting Commissioner Morgan:

Thank you for providing the document entitled *U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Increased Care, Capacity and Medical Mitigation Efforts* this past Friday, November 15, 2019. The document purports to describe the “medical mitigation efforts” undertaken by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), including the deployment of medical personnel overseeing the health of migrant children in the ongoing humanitarian crisis at the U.S. southern border. Your efforts appear to have yielded the placement of only *four* pediatricians across more than *forty-five* locations. It is unclear whether these pediatricians are even providing direct clinical care to migrant infants and children.

This is unacceptable. Our offices have been discussing the need for pediatric medical professionals to care for migrant children at the U.S. southern border since July of this year. The Department must hire additional pediatricians and specialized pediatric medical professionals, with more than cursory basic pediatric training, to ensure the health and wellbeing of migrant infants and children held in CBP custody.

This month, the United Nations released a report stating that nearly 70,000 children spent time in detention in the U.S. this year. By this count, the United States detained more children in 2019 than anywhere else in the world.¹ Detained children can experience “developmental delays and poor psychological adjustment [,] . . . posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and other behavioral problems.”² Pediatricians and medical personnel with pediatric experience specialize in promptly identifying and treating illnesses in children and can provide a qualified diagnosis of overall patient health. Additionally, illnesses in children can manifest differently than in adults, with varying symptoms, severity, and complications.

¹ *U.S. held record number of migrant children in custody in 2019*, AP News (November 12, 2019) (available online at <https://apnews.com/015702afdb4d4fbf85cf5070cd2c6824>).

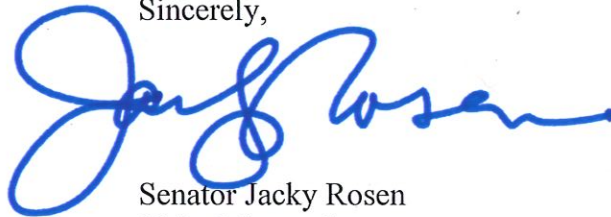
² *Detention of Immigrant Children*, Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics (March 2017) (available online at <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2017/03/09/peds.2017-0483>).

Even under the best conditions, detention can have profound impacts on a child's physical and mental health. It is indisputable that the children detained at CBP facilities at the southern border suffered substandard, inhumane conditions. At least seven children died in CBP custody. Plainly, four pediatricians are woefully insufficient to address the health needs of thousands of detained children.

The increase in contracted medical professionals at CBP detention facilities holding migrant children is a step in the right direction, but there is no excuse after the tragedies of the past year not to have adequate specialized *pediatric* medical staffing. If the Department is committed to solving the humanitarian crisis at the U.S. southern border – as you both committed to me in public hearings and, in the case of Acting Secretary Wolf, a private call – it must take immediate action to hire additional pediatricians and medical professionals with certified pediatric experience.

If you have any questions or if you would like to discuss further, please contact me or have your office contact Alejandro Renteria on my staff at (202) 224-6244.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jacky Rosen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "R".

Senator Jacky Rosen
United States Senator