

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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September 28, 2026

The Honorable T. March Bell
Inspector General
Department of Health and Human Services
330 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Inspector General Bell,

I write to request that you investigate the Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) process for issuing contracts to organizations providing legal services to unaccompanied children. Under current law, ORR is required to ensure that the legal services provided to unaccompanied children are "qualified and independent."¹ ORR actions over the last year and a half indicate the agency is not serious about providing legal representation to children and may be working to expedite the deportation of unaccompanied minors. These actions raise significant legal and ethical concerns that must be investigated.

ORR did not renew its contracts with experienced providers that have provided legal services to children for decades and attempted to withhold pay for legal services providers had already performed.² ORR allowed these contracts to expire after the Trump Administration requested protected information about children and providers refused to violate attorney-client privilege to provide that information.³ This has caused gaps in legal representation that have led to young children going to hearings without a lawyer. In one instance, a baby with no legal representation was asked by a judge to file an asylum claim or face deportation.⁴ This disruption has caused unnecessary hardship for vulnerable children and makes it more likely unaccompanied children will be deported and subjected to dangerous and unstable situations.

ORR has attempted to issue new contracts to unqualified organizations with deeply troubling records and ties to the Trump Administration. ORR awarded the organization Our

¹ 6 U.S. Code § 279(b)(1)(A)

² *More Than 25,000 Children Lose Previous Legal Protections, as Federal Contract Ends*, NPR (Aug. 1, 2026) (online at www.npr.org/2026/08/01/nx-s1-5913679/immigrant-children-lawyers-trump-administration).

³ *Texas Law Firm Withdraws From \$150M Contract to Represent Unaccompanied Migrant Children*, ABC News (Aug. 13, 2026) (online at <https://abcnews.com/US/texas-law-firm-withdraws-150m-contract-represent-unaccompanied/story?id=135625919>).

⁴ *Judge to Baby: File an Asylum Application*, NOTUS (Aug. 21, 2026) (online at www.notus.org/immigration/baby-asylum-hearing).

Rescue a \$244 million per year contract to represent the thousands of unaccompanied children with pending immigration cases. This organization is led by a former Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) official and does not appear to have experience in representing clients in any court setting. This organization's track record is equally concerning, as their previous CEO was accused of sexual assault and trafficking while carrying out the organization's anti-human trafficking efforts.⁵ ORR had also announced a \$150 million award to a small law firm led by a former Trump Administration official with no immigration experience, which resulted in the law firm backing out following public scrutiny.⁶ Finally, ORR awarded the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCIR) \$20 million to provide legal services. However, USCIR attorneys have reportedly failed to adequately represent unaccompanied children in court.⁷

ORR's previous attempts to remove unaccompanied children without due process demonstrates the Trump Administration's disregard for these children's legal rights. In August 2025, a whistleblower reported plans to deport hundreds of undocumented minors to Guatemala. The Administration attempted to deport at least 76 of these children in the middle of the night without access to counsel or sufficient legal justification before being blocked by a federal judge.⁸ The Senate Finance Committee received an additional whistleblower report that ORR plans to use unprecedented legal loopholes to deport 500 additional children in its care.⁹ It is clear that ORR is prioritizing the removal of children over their legal rights, and that the selection of new legal service providers may be a part of this approach.

A failure to provide quality legal services will lead to vulnerable children who have a right to remain in the U.S. being deported to potentially dangerous and unstable environments. I request that you investigate the following topics and provide a report to Congress with your findings as soon as possible:

1. Whether ORR is prioritizing allies of the Trump Administration for awards;

⁵ *Disgraced Anti-Sex-Trafficking NGO Gets \$244 Million to Rep Migrant Kids*, The American Prospect (Aug. 11, 2026) (online at <https://prospect.org/2026/08/11/our-rescue-disgraced-anti-sex-trafficking-ngo-migrant-kids/>).

⁶ *Texas Law Firm Withdraws From \$150M Contract to Represent Unaccompanied Migrant Children*, ABC News (Aug. 13, 2026) (online at <https://abcnews.com/US/texas-law-firm-withdraws-150m-contract-represent-unaccompanied/story?id=135625919>).

⁷ *Judge to Baby: File an Asylum Application*, NOTUS (Aug. 21, 2026) (online at www.notus.org/immigration/baby-asylum-hearing).

⁸ *US Judge Block Expulsion of Guatemalan Children*, Human Rights Watch (Sept. 19, 2025) (online at www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/19/us-judge-blocks-expulsion-of-guatemalan-children).

⁹ Letter from Senator Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee, to the Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (June 24, 2026) (online at www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/06242026_letter_to_hhs_re_orr_and_uc_cat_4_mass_deportation_planning.pdf).

2. Whether the contracted legal service providers made commitments to encourage the children they represent to voluntarily agree to deportation or voluntary removal;
 - a. Whether ORR requested that awardees do this;
3. Whether the contracted legal service providers shared or agreed to share confidential client information with ORR, including information protected by attorney client privilege;
 - a. Whether ORR requested confidential client information from the awardees;
4. Whether the contracted legal service providers made any commitments to avoid or promote certain legal strategies in their representation of unaccompanied children;
 - a. Whether ORR requested that awardees do this;
5. Whether ORR received a directive from the White House or Department of Health and Human Services leadership to promote deportations of unaccompanied children;
6. How ORR evaluated the contracted legal service providers' ability to provide services and if that evaluation considered providers' ability to provide services that are child friendly and trauma informed;
7. How ORR evaluated the potential contracts and made the determination to make an award without an open bid and whether this justification was sufficient, given that higher quality and/or lower cost providers were available;
8. Why ORR failed to ensure the children's case continuity and fund a timely transition plan after the lapse in the previous contract, and if you find this justification to be sufficient to meet ORR's fiduciary and statutory obligations; and
9. How legal status outcomes for unaccompanied children have changed since the new legal service providers were selected.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Greg Casar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" and last name "Casar" clearly distinguishable.

Greg Casar
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Federal Law Enforcement

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Clay Higgins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Federal Law Enforcement