

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

April 21, 2021

Kathleen M. McGettigan
Acting Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Washington D.C. 20415

Dear Acting Director McGettigan:

I am writing to request information on the impact the current border crisis is having on the U.S. federal workforce. There is nothing seasonal about the current crisis on the southwest border, particularly in the case of the increasing numbers of unaccompanied alien children (UAC) being smuggled into the country. Due to the unprecedented influx of UAC encountered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and referred to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), HHS is currently caring for over 20,000 UACs, a record.¹ The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has even been activated to attend to the crisis.²

To expand its capacity to accept UAC from DHS, where thousands of children have been languishing for days awaiting placements, HHS has had to open twelve emergency intake sites since February 22, which it operates in addition to licensed facilities throughout the country.³ This effort to care for the UAC in government custody is estimated to cost approximately \$60 million per week, with costs expected to increase as more children arrive.⁴

To meet the need for additional staff and resources, HHS solicited volunteers from across the federal government. On March 25, 2021, OPM put out a request for volunteers from across

¹ Montoya-Galvez, Camilo, *Biden officials defend border response as number of migrant children in U.S. custody tops 20,000*, CBS NEWS (Apr. 8, 2021), available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/migrant-children-us-mexico-border-biden-response/>.

² Press Release: *Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas Directs FEMA to Support Response for Unaccompanied Children*, Dep't of Homeland Security (Mar. 13, 2021), available at <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/03/13/homeland-security-secretary-mayorkas-directs-fema-support-response-unaccompanied>.

³ See E-mail from HHS re: Activation of an Emergency Intake Site at the Starr Commonwealth Campus in Albion, Michigan (Apr. 9, 2021), *on file with committee staff*.

⁴ Miroff, Nick, *Biden administration spending \$60 million per week to shelter unaccompanied minors*, WASH. POST, (Apr. 8, 2021), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/border-shelters-cost/2021/04/08/c54eec3a-97bd-11eb-8e42-3906c09073f9_story.html.

the federal government to serve up to 120-day deployment details to HHS to assist with caring for UAC.⁵ In the memorandum to Department and Agency heads, you stated that “[d]etails will involve contact with migrant children and a variety of other federal and non-federal entities, possibly including U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), American Red Cross, [FEMA], and other HHS employees.”⁶

To assist the subcommittee in exercising important oversight of the situation on the southwest border and to understand the impact the border crisis is having on the federal workforce overall, please provide the following information no later than May 5, 2021:

1. The total number of federal employees who have volunteered for a reimbursable detail with HHS as outlined in the March 25, 2021 memorandum, disaggregated by federal agency/department, permanent job title, and expected length of detail.
2. All documents and communications containing an analysis of the impact of such details on the sending agencies/departments and performance of the volunteer’s original duties.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. To make arrangements to deliver documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican Staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely



Jody Hice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations

cc: The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations

⁵ Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies from Kathleen M. McGettigan, Acting Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management re: Detail Opportunity (Mar. 25, 2021), *available at* <https://chcoc.gov/content/detail-opportunity-information-departmentagency-leadership>.

⁶ *Id.*