

# United States Senate

July 20, 2018

## VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Ms. Evelyn Diaz  
President  
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights  
208 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 1300  
Chicago, IL 60604

Dear Ms. Diaz:

I am writing to request Heartland Alliance take swift and immediate action to complete its internal investigation and remedy the allegations of abuse experienced by children in your Casa Guadalupe shelter, as reported by *The Washington Post*. The article details allegations from numerous children's accounts of physical and emotional abuse while in the care of Casa Guadalupe.

As you are aware, *The Washington Post* reported allegations that your staff "dragged" a young boy from a soccer field and denied adequate medical treatment to a child who fractured his arm after falling on a concrete basketball court. Other children recounted that employees injected a child with an unknown medication causing him to fall ill. I am extremely alarmed by these allegations. If true, these actions have caused additional trauma to children already suffering due to inhumane separation from their loved ones.

That is why I have requested the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) to initiate a comprehensive review to determine whether HHS took the necessary steps to prioritize the health, safety and wellbeing of children in the Department's custody. I also requested that HHS OIG investigate the allegations of child abuse at Casa Guadalupe specifically and expeditiously make an unredacted report available to the public.

I understand that your agency has initiated an investigation regarding these allegations of child abuse and is cooperating with interagency efforts to address these concerns. I am requesting that you provide my office with the findings of the investigation along with a detailed action plan to ensure this problem is addressed. Moving forward, Heartland Alliance must remove any staff responsible for participating in abusive behavior and ensure that all staff are properly trained in the care of children.

While I understand the immense challenges facing Heartland Alliance as a result of the Trump Administration's draconian "zero tolerance" policy, I expect this agency to provide the best possible care to children in their custody and uphold Federal and Illinois standards of child

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welfare services. Earlier this month, I reached out to your agency, along with other HHS contracted sites throughout Illinois, to better understand the capacity of organizations in our State to provide quality care to these children. I am reiterating my request that you make my office aware if your agency lacks the adequate resources, workforce or support to meet the demands created by the Trump Administration's "zero tolerance" policy.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to reviewing your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator