

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: HELP Committee Democrats call for oversight hearing on Trump administration's separated families

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When will children be reunited with their parents?

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin and Tim Kaine today led Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee colleagues in a letter to Chairman Lamar Alexander and Ranking Member Patty Murray calling for an oversight hearing on efforts by the Department of Health and Human Services to reunite families that the Trump Administration's "Zero Tolerance" policy separated at the border.

"We are troubled by press reports regarding the challenges the Department has faced in reporting the number of children who must be reunited, as well as locating their parents," wrote the Senators in their letter. "We are concerned that the Department was unable to initially meet a court-imposed deadline to reunite the youngest of the affected children with their families. With many children still in the care of ORR and awaiting reunification with their families, including parents who may have been deported to their countries of origin, we believe the Committee must take the opportunity to understand how the Department intends to expeditiously complete the remaining reunification efforts."

In addition to Baldwin and Kaine, the letter was also signed by Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO), Bob Casey (D-PA), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Doug Jones (D-AL), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Tina Smith (D-MN) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

A copy of the letter is available [here](#) and included below.

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

We write to respectfully request an oversight hearing regarding the efforts of the Department of Health and Human Services to care for children separated from their families as a result of the administration's "Zero Tolerance" policy and to reunite them with their parents as required by the President's subsequent directive, as well as a federal court order. As you know, Secretary Azar asked Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Kadlec to assist the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) with the reunification effort, and hundreds of the Department's staff were detailed to support this work.

We are troubled by press reports regarding the challenges the Department has faced in reporting the number of children who must be reunited, as well as locating their parents. We are concerned that the Department was unable to initially meet a court-imposed deadline to reunite the youngest of the affected children with their families. With many children still in the care of ORR and awaiting reunification with their families, including parents who may have been deported to their countries of origin, we believe the Committee must take the opportunity to understand how the Department intends to expeditiously complete the remaining reunification efforts.

Furthermore, we believe the Committee has a responsibility to examine the standards of care, staffing ratios, credentials for contractors and other conditions and practices at ORR facilities, to ensure that the remaining children - as well as the truly unaccompanied minors in the Office's custody - are appropriately cared for.

Thank you again for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to focus on this urgent health and humanitarian concern.