

# U.S. Sen. Johnson and colleagues: Demand hearing to investigate Biden administration's inhumane treatment of migrant children

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**WASHINGTON** – On Monday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), member of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, was joined by U.S. Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.) and U.S. Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) in a letter demanding Sen. Gary Peters (D-Mich.), Chairman of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, hold a hearing to investigate an alarming whistleblower report that claims the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is knowingly transferring unaccompanied migrant children in the custody of known criminals, including sex traffickers.

“On November 29, 2022, Project Veritas released a video of its interview with Tara Lee Rodas, an employee at the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) who was formerly detailed with HHS at the Emergency Intake Site in Pomona, California,” **the senators explained.**

Ms. Rodas made several disturbing claims about HHS and the Unaccompanied Children Program including “we know that children have been trafficked through the [Unaccompanied Children] program” and “we are paying to put children in the hands of criminals.”

“With Ms. Rodas’s courageous whistleblowing, the committee can no longer continue to allow this Administration to dodge scrutiny over its inhumane border crisis. Therefore, we demand that you to hold a hearing to investigate Ms. Rodas’s claims, calling as witnesses HHS Secretary Becerra, DHS Secretary Mayorkas, and

CIGIE Chair Allison Lerner," **the senators concluded.**

In previous hearings, where the senators pressed HHS and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for more information about human trafficking at our southern border, administration officials did not answer their questions.

Sen. Johnson also wrote a [letter](#) to HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra requesting information on the alarming whistleblower report.

Read more about the letter in [Fox News](#).

A copy of the letter can be found [here](#) and below.

December 5, 2022

The Honorable Gary Peters

Chairman

U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Dear Chairman Peters:

We write in response to recently reported claims by federal employee whistleblower that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is knowingly transferring unaccompanied migrant children in the custody of criminals, including sex traffickers. This cannot be swept under the rug. Congress must immediately take action to stop the atrocities this whistleblower claims are being committed by the federal government itself. The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs must call a hearing to further investigate these whistleblower claims.

On November 29, 2022, Project Veritas released a video of its interview with Tara Lee Rodas, an employee at the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) who was formerly detailed with HHS at the Emergency Intake Site in Pomona, California.<sup>[2]</sup> In just a 12-minute video, Ms. Rodas asserted several disturbing claims regarding the Unaccompanied Children Program and HHS's failure to ensure children in the program are transported to safe, non-criminal sponsors, including:

- “It’s just strange that HHS knows there’s a lot of children going to one area, and yet they’re not doing anything to say ‘there’s going to be a mandatory home study before we send one more child here.’”
- “[The Biden Administration] relaxed a lot of the stringent vetting by creating these additional field guidances, and there’s a focus on ‘move the children’ as opposed to ‘place children in safe homes.’ Right now, it is speed over safety.”
- “HHS does not want federal law enforcement going after their sponsors in any way.”
- “Our sponsors typically are not citizens; they are not permanent residents. They don’t have legal presence.”
- “[Most people] have no idea that children are going to unrelated people. That children are definitely—we have proof, evidence—that they are being recruited and transported. They are then in debt bondage.”
- “We know that children have been trafficked through the [Unaccompanied Children] program.”
- “Once the children are gone to the sponsor, there’s nothing we can do about it. There’s nothing that HHS can do.”
- “We are paying to put children in the hands of criminals.”

The most reprehensible claim by Ms. Rodas occurred when she raised concerns to command center executives about placing another unaccompanied child in a questionable home. According to Ms. Rodas, someone told her, “I think you need to understand we only get sued if we keep kids in care too long. We don’t get sued by traffickers. Are you clear? We don’t get sued by traffickers.”

It angers us that this Administration is more concerned about lawsuits than about protecting a child from sex slavery. We have long known that the Biden Administration’s open border policies are fueling human trafficking and child sex trafficking, as migrants repay debts to the cartels who transport them to illegally cross the border. In committee hearings and briefings, We have repeatedly pressed HHS and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for information about human trafficking across our border and continuing into our communities. However, this Administration is either unable or unwilling to answer our questions.

With Ms. Rodas's courageous whistleblowing, the committee can no longer continue to allow this Administration to dodge scrutiny over its inhumane border crisis. Therefore, we demand that you to hold a hearing to investigate Ms. Rodas's claims, calling as witnesses HHS Secretary Becerra, DHS Secretary Mayorkas, and CIGIE Chair Allison Lerner.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.