



BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR
STATE OF TENNESSEE

July 25, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

I write to you to express my concern about the number of unaccompanied immigrant children entering this country and the failure of the federal government to notify states in which children are being released.

On July 13, the nation's governors met with Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Sylvia Burwell during the annual National Governors Association meeting, which I hosted in Nashville this year. We spent a significant amount of time in that meeting discussing the issue of unaccompanied immigrant children. Although this is a complex issue and one that ultimately must be solved at the federal government level, governors are rightly concerned about the impact on states. We emphasized to Secretary Burwell the need to be informed of any children being relocated to our states.

It is unacceptable that we became aware via a posting on the HHS website that 760 unaccompanied children have been released by the Office of Refugee Resettlement to sponsors in Tennessee without my administration's knowledge. Not only was our state not informed prior to any of the children being brought here, I still have not been contacted and have no information about these individuals or their sponsors other than what was posted on the HHS website and subsequently reported by media.

Although solving the border crisis is a federal responsibility, this influx of immigrant children could have a significant impact on state and local governments. Therefore, we strongly believe that the state needs to be informed prior to any additional unaccompanied immigrant children being released in Tennessee, and we also need immediate answers to the following questions:

1. What was the process for determining that these children should be released to sponsors in Tennessee?
2. How did you locate and evaluate the fitness of their sponsors?
3. What medical screenings were the children given prior to their release in Tennessee?
4. What is the official immigration status of these children and their sponsors?
5. In what localities are these children now residing?

6. What are the legal requirements concerning the provision of services for these children while they are in the state?
7. What additional information is available on these children, such as age and health status?
8. How long will these children be in Tennessee?

Tennessee is a diverse and welcoming state, and we also understand that this is a complicated issue. However, an influx of unaccompanied immigrant children to the state, with little information being made available to the public or to state leaders, creates confusion and could be very problematic. The start of school is approaching for many districts across the state, and the federal government's actions have caused great uncertainty around this issue.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to receiving a response to these urgent questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Haslam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "H".

Bill Haslam
Governor

cc: The Honorable Sylvia Burwell, Secretary, HHS