

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 19, 2026

Eskinder Negash  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants  
2231 Crystal Drive, Suite 350  
Arlington, VA 22202

Mr. Negash:

We write regarding the Trump Administration's recent statements describing the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) as an "interim legal-services model," under which USCRI will provide legal services to unaccompanied children across the country.<sup>1</sup> While USCRI has supported unaccompanied children with other services for decades, as well as previously providing immigration legal services for Afghan and Ukrainian parolees under a contract with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), providing legal services of this nature and scope to children would be a new responsibility for USCRI.<sup>2</sup> The Senate Finance Committee and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform have a responsibility to ensure that ORR contracts and grants for children's legal services are being awarded responsibly and seek to understand how USCRI will conduct this work.

The Committees, of which we serve as Ranking Members, are engaged in ongoing oversight of the Trump administration's use of federal funds Congress appropriated to protect unaccompanied children. As part of that oversight, we have requested information from the Burke Law Group, PLLC ("Burke Law Group"), regarding the August 4, 2026, Federal Register notice announcing the Trump administration's intent to award Burke Law Group a single-source cooperative

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<sup>1</sup> Notice of Filing of Declaration and Ex. A, *Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto v. HHS*, No. 4:25-cv-02847-AMO, ECF No. 177, ¶ 5 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 13, 2026), <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.cand.447078/gov.uscourts.cand.447078.177.0.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Declaration of Richard B. Debany in Support of Defendants' Opposition, *Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto v. HHS*, No. 4:25-cv-02847-AMO, ECF No. 171 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 6, 2026), <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.cand.447078/gov.uscourts.cand.447078.171.0.pdf>; Dear Colleague Letter 23-36 from Kenneth Tota, Refugee Program Director, *Reminder: Immigration-Related Legal Assistance Allowable Under ORR ASA Funding* (Sept. 28, 2023), <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/orr/dcl-23-36-reminder-asa-immigration-related-legal-assistance.pdf>; U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, *Humanitarian Legal Services*, <https://refugees.org/legal-services/> (last visited Aug. 14, 2026).

agreement of up to \$150 million, and from Our Rescue regarding the August 7, 2026, sole-source contract of \$158.1 million and up to \$244 million.<sup>3</sup> Both letters raise concerns about qualifications, capacity, information-sharing, and the process by which the awards were made. USCRI is the third entity the administration has designated to represent unaccompanied children following the July 31, 2026, expiration of the legal services bridge contract.

On August 6, 2026, ORR filed a declaration in *Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto v. HHS (CLSEPA v. HHS)* representing that on August 4, ORR awarded USCRI a supplemental cooperative agreement in an amount of up to \$20 million to provide legal services for unaccompanied children through at least December 2026.<sup>4</sup> On August 13, 2026, ORR filed another declaration with the court in which USCRI's role was described as providing "legal orientations and consultations and, where appropriate, direct legal representation, while reporting updated representation and hearing information back to ORR."<sup>5</sup> The declaration further represents that USCRI "presently has 57 legal personnel dedicated to this work," including 30 staff attorneys, 6 supervising attorneys, 2 managing attorneys, 1 Program Director, and 17 paralegals and program assistants; that USCRI attorneys "have provided 100% coverage for all hearings, with all required services being offered during this interim period;" and that "in locations where issues have arisen, in-person appearances have been prioritized."<sup>6</sup>

The declaration does not describe where USCRI's legal personnel are deployed, what Executive Office for Immigration Review ("EOIR") jurisdictions they cover, how many children are represented as attorney of record versus Friend of the Court ("FOC") or other capacities, what direct legal representation USCRI is providing looks like in practice, what the "locations where issues have arisen" are, or how many hearings the "100% coverage" figure encompasses.<sup>7</sup> Nor does it describe what reporting back to ORR means for USCRI's attorneys and their child clients—a representation that on its face raises serious concerns about information-sharing, attorney-client privilege, and the professional responsibility obligations USCRI attorneys owe under the ethics rules of the jurisdictions in which they are appearing.

Recent accounts of the representation children are receiving are difficult to reconcile with the Trump administration's representations to the court. Legal service providers across the country have reported that children in ORR custody are appearing in immigration court without counsel and receiving removal orders, that "Know Your Rights" presentations and legal screenings are

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<sup>3</sup> *Announcement of the Intent To Award a Single-Source Cooperative Agreement to Burke Law Group, PLLC in Houston, Texas*, 91 Fed. Reg. 50848 (Aug. 4, 2026), <https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2026-16081.pdf?1785874509>; Award Notice, Contract No. 7571MN26C00029, System for Award Management (Aug. 7, 2026), <https://sam.gov/opp/3994b176dd184f02b72b043594ea419f/view>; Recipient Profile, Our Rescue, USAspending.gov, <https://www.usaspending.gov/recipient/ae39dfc1-948c-58f4-274b-448ec4ecedce-P/latest> (last visited Aug. 14, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> Declaration of Richard B. Debany, *supra* note 2 at ¶ 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ex. A, *supra* note 1 at ¶ 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

not being provided at facilities where they were previously delivered, and that in the limited jurisdictions where USCRI has attempted to appear as FOC, immigration judges have denied USCRI permission to appear at all for reasons including that virtual appearances are not permitted in certain immigration court locations, that USCRI attorneys were not present in person, and, in at least one reported instance, that USCRI's attire did not comply with courtroom standards. FOC presence is not full legal representation. Hearings are not the only obligation attorneys owe to the children they represent.

The Trump administration withheld more than \$65 million in payments to the prior legal services network, beginning with work performed in December 2025, after that network declined to disclose privileged information about the children it represented.<sup>8</sup> On August 6, 2026, the CLSEPA v. HHS court enjoined the practice, ordered the Trump administration to release the withheld funds by the following day, and expressly prohibited the government from conditioning payment “on receipt of any further information” from the affected providers.<sup>9</sup> We are concerned that ORR may attempt to make similar information demands of USCRI as a condition of continued performance under the supplemental cooperative agreement.

We therefore request a briefing with you and USCRI leadership, and written responses to the following questions, no later than **August 28, 2026**:

1. Please provide a copy of USCRI's August 4, 2026, supplemental cooperative agreement with ORR or, if one is still being negotiated, a written summary of its material terms, including scope, funding level, expected duration, and performance requirements until the supplement is executed. Please describe when USCRI was first approached about this arrangement, by whom, and through what channels.
2. Please confirm the accuracy of ORR's representations to the federal court. Please identify where USCRI personnel are deployed geographically, what EOIR jurisdictions they are covering, how many hearings the 100% coverage figure encompasses since USCRI began performance on August 5, 2026, the number of appearances entered for any child, either with EOIR or the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, how many children each attorney is currently representing, and the nature of that representation. Please identify the locations where issues have arisen referenced in ORR's declaration, describe those issues, and describe how USCRI has resolved them. Please provide all documents and communications relating to any hearing in which USCRI attempted to appear as FOC, as attorney of record, or in any other capacity and was denied permission to appear, was

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<sup>8</sup> Chiara Eisner, *More Than 25,000 Children Lose Previous Legal Protections, as Federal Contract Ends*, NPR (Aug. 1, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/08/01/nx-s1-5913679/immigrant-children-lawyers-trump-administration>.

<sup>9</sup> Order Granting Motion to Enforce Preliminary Injunction, *Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto v. HHS*, No. 4:25-cv-02847-AMO, ECF No. 172, 2-3 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 6, 2026), <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.cand.447078/gov.uscourts.cand.447078.172.0.pdf>.

removed from the hearing, or was otherwise unable to complete the appearance, including the jurisdiction, date, and stated reason for each such occurrence.

3. Please describe what USCRI understands “reporting updated representation and hearing information back to ORR” to entail. Please describe the specific information USCRI has agreed to share with ORR, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), or any other federal agency about the children USCRI is representing, their family members, their prospective sponsors, or the substance of USCRI's representation. Please describe whether ORR has requested that USCRI share such information as a condition of payment or continued performance, and USCRI's response to any such request. Please describe how USCRI has evaluated its ability to comply with attorney-client privilege obligations and applicable ethics rules under the arrangement's framework, particularly given HHS's representation that ORR “provides USCRI with recurring information identifying children in ORR care with upcoming immigration court hearings, including daily information concerning next-day hearings.”<sup>10</sup>
4. Please describe any directives, guidance, or expectations ORR has communicated to USCRI regarding the substantive representation of children, including but not limited to guidance on the pursuit of particular forms of relief, continuances for unrepresented children, the scope of FOC representation, or interactions with immigration judges and DHS counsel. Please provide copies of any written directives or guidance, including any communications from the ORR “full-time coordinator” HHS has designated to “oversee case assignments, track hearing coverage and representation status, address discrepancies or gaps, and coordinate the eventual phased transition of cases to successor providers.”<sup>11</sup>
5. Please describe USCRI's policy and practice and provide all related documents for identifying whether unaccompanied children referred to USCRI already have legal representation, including through attorneys formerly funded under the prior legal services network who are continuing on a pro bono basis, independent pro bono counsel, or other attorneys who have entered appearances via EOIR-28. Please describe how USCRI is confirming existing representation before initiating any legal orientation, consultation, or direct representation, and USCRI's policy for engaging with children who are already represented, and provide all related documents. To the extent USCRI has communicated with the organizations that previously represented these children, or intends to do so, please describe the substance and cadence of that outreach and provide such communications. To the extent USCRI is coordinating with any prior representation to support an orderly transition of unrepresented cases only, please describe how that transition is being structured to avoid disrupting the attorney-client relationships children

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<sup>10</sup> Ex. A, *supra* note 1 at ¶ 5.

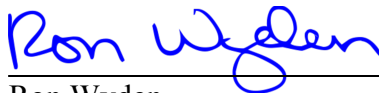
<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

already have. To the extent USCRI or ORR is contemplating any change in representation for children who already have counsel, please describe the legal and factual basis for such a change and any process for notifying children and their existing attorneys.

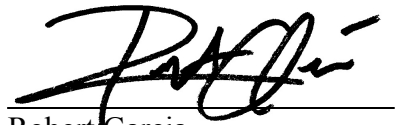
6. Please describe any communications between USCRI and Our Rescue, Burke Law Group, or any other organization that has either been in discussions with the Trump administration regarding legal services for unaccompanied children or is seeking to provide such legal services, and provide such communications.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. The Senate Finance Committee has broad oversight and investigatory authority under Senate Rules XXV and XXVI over federal programs and the utilization of federal funding that supports the Unaccompanied Children Program. USCRI is uniquely positioned to answer the questions this letter raises, and USCRI's responses will inform our Committees' ongoing oversight of the Trump administration's use of federal funds Congress appropriated to protect unaccompanied children. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on Finance



Robert Garcia  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and  
Government Reform