

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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Ranking Member Summer L. Lee
Subcommittee on Federal Law Enforcement
“Catch and Release, Lose and Forget: Addressing the Crisis of Unaccompanied Alien Children – Part I”
July 23, 2025

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Over the last six months, President Trump, Kristi Noem, and Stephen Miller have unleashed a brutal, reckless and lawless regime that targets innocent members of our communities, parents dropping their kids off at school or attending church, legal immigrants who have been welcome in this country for decades, international students, and even children who are U.S. citizens. They are behaving without humanity, justice or decency.

Children are increasingly the target of President Trump’s anti-immigrant crusades. DHS has failed to be transparent and publish any data since January, but looking at the court cases has shown that children have been increasingly and disproportionately marked for deportation by Trump.

Over [53,000](#) children have been ordered for deportation since the start of this Administration. These are mostly elementary school kids or younger. How often the court cases end in deportations has also climbed under Trump, especially for kids. Over [75%](#) of children 11 and younger are now being ordered for deportation as a result of their immigration court proceedings. Are these little kids the dangerous criminals Trump vowed to go after?

President Trump is also kidnapping and illegally removing U.S. citizens, including multiple children with cancer. We’re talking about unprecedented actions without Due Process against U.S. citizens. The Trump Administration removed one 10-year-old girl—a U.S. citizen—who was recovering from brain cancer with her parents, even though she needed medical care.

Another 4-year-old boy was illegally removed, also a U.S. citizen, with a rare form of cancer. The judge in that case said the Trump Administration had “just deported a U.S. citizen with no meaningful process.”

Over [500](#) immigrant children have been removed from their families and homes and thrown into government custody. Let’s call this what it is. Just like his first time as president, Donald Trump and Stephen Miller are separating kids from their parents.

It is unconscionable. And as the Trump Administration detains more human beings, detention facilities are becoming even more overcrowded and dangerous. The conditions that children and innocent people are being held in have been called “unsanitary” and even “inhumane.”

The government has some bare minimum standards in place for children in government custody, but Trump has attempted to roll those protections back or simply violated them—all while denying Members of Congress their lawful ability to conduct oversight of these facilities. Republicans are complicit in this. And increasingly, children are being held in ICE facilities like “Alligator Alcatraz” or newly reopened “family detention centers” like one in Dilley, Texas.

This Administration is using every resource at its disposal to target innocent people for kidnapping and disappearance. It’s even using data collected to identify sponsors for unaccompanied children to target those sponsors, often parents or other family members, for deportation. Putting the very people who are able to help these kids in danger.

These are unspeakable injustices that demand oversight, and we have a witness here today who bears the responsibility of conducting such oversight. Mr. Cuffari is the Inspector General who is *supposed* to be rooting out misconduct at the Department of Homeland Security. Instead, he’s working with Republicans to twist the facts, so people ignore the cages and the kids with cancer, and other despicable actions.

He himself is guilty of committing serious misconduct against the American people. This includes spending taxpayer money retaliating against whistleblowers who called him out for delaying a report about Donald Trump *actually* losing children. This was when Trump’s first Administration separated immigrant kids from their parents and then failed to keep track of them.

As many as [1,360](#) of those kids were never reunited with their parents. Inspector General Cuffari has made clear that he is interested in protecting Donald Trump, not lost children, and that he has no problem lying to Congress to further his goals. On this issue, he has absolutely zero credibility.

When the Trump Administration creates a culture of terror, in which children are afraid to go to school and are afraid to speak to authorities for fear that they or someone they love will be snatched and deported, children suffer. These policies leave children at greater risk of trafficking and exploitation.

I expect my Republican colleagues to care about this because their constituents certainly care about child sex trafficking, whether it’s through the immigration system, like this hearing alleges, or by a U.S. citizen facilitating other powerful U.S. citizens.

It’s time for them to prove it. Right now, Speaker Johnson is helping Donald Trump block the release of all the files relating to child sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein.

If you want to take a stand against child trafficking, let’s do it together.

When powerful people exploit children, they must be held accountable for their actions. And if they try to mislead the public and hide evidence, we can't let them get away with it. We cannot allow individuals, especially those at the highest level of our government, to protect child sex traffickers.

So, that is why today, I will be offering a motion to subpoena the Department of Justice to release the Epstein files. Numerous members of this committee and this subcommittee have called for answers and transparency. So, let's do something about it.

Rep. Biggs has said, "We want to get to the bottom of it."

Rep. Mace has stated, "I believe we need answers on Epstein. If 1,000 kids were trafficked, how is there only one accomplice?"

Rep. Perry has written to Pam Bondi on Epstein, saying, "The American People deserve answers and justice, particularly in matters involving grave allegations of criminality and misconduct by influential figures."

Rep. Boebert said, "We deserve the truth about the Epstein Files."

Yesterday, our Government Operations Subcommittee approved a motion directing Chairman Comer to subpoena Ghislaine Maxwell to appear for a deposition before this Committee. But Ms. Maxwell is currently serving a 20-year federal prison sentence for her role in sex trafficking children with Jeffrey Epstein. She could have a motivation to protect powerful people to get a lighter sentence.

We need the actual Epstein files to get the full truth. So, I hope my Republican colleagues will join me in supporting a motion to subpoena the Department of Justice to release the Epstein files.

With that, pursuant to clause 2(k)(6) of House Rule XI, I move that the subcommittee issue a subpoena to the Department of Justice for the full, complete, un-redacted Epstein Files to be delivered concurrently to the Majority and Minority of the Subcommittee on Federal Law Enforcement of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

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