

AMY KLOBUCHAR
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 25, 2015

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
U.S Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:


I write to express my concern regarding recent reports about the treatment of women and children from Central America who arrived at the United States-Mexico border to escape violence and poverty.

As you know, serious complaints have surfaced regarding the conditions of DHS facilities that house these families as well as the treatment of detained families, including allegations of sexual abuse, isolation, coercion, delay, and denial of access to legal process. I understand that DHS is subject to active litigation on this topic, and I urge you to take whatever steps are necessary to resolve these issues in a manner that protects public safety, but also protects the safety of the families whose cases the government is considering.

I appreciate that DHS is attempting to remedy the problems with family detention. At the same time, earlier this month, the District Court for the Central District of California reaffirmed its view that DHS was not in compliance with its legal obligations. Also recently, new and troubling allegations arose concerning sexual abuse at the Karnes Detention facility. This is unacceptable. DHS must provide a humane environment that respects the rights and welfare of these families and only rely on family detention in appropriate cases, such as where the family members are a flight risk or pose a threat to community safety.

Ensuring public safety and protecting the health and safety of the families, as well as their access to legal process, should all be top priorities for DHS. I appreciate all that you have done to improve conditions at family detention facilities but they must only be used when appropriate.

Sincerely,


Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator