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The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

I write today to first thank you for your response to the urgent humanitarian situation occurring across the southwest border. The coordinated federal response effort to ensure the health and safety of the unaccompanied children is imperative due to the severely strained resources along the southwest border, and the overwhelming humanitarian consequences we confront as a nation.

Recently the Department of Homeland Security designated a facility in Nogales, Arizona for the purpose of preliminary processing and shelter of unaccompanied children that are being transported from Texas. I understand resources are strained and immediate actions need to be taken however, according to reports, this facility is not in a suitable condition to hold the unaccompanied children. It has been reported that this facility was recently opened after being closed for several years and does not have indoor plumbing. Please provide my office immediately with written details on improvements that are underway, what these improvements will entail, and the time it will take to complete all necessary improvements. Additionally, provide details on a contingency location in the event that improvements necessary to make conditions habitable are not immediately possible.

Furthermore, it is critical that immediate plans are made to construct or repurpose buildings in Texas that are suitable for processing and housing to avoid extended transportation. Historic amounts of funding are provided for border security, the same consideration should be given for humanitarian situations that result from our broken immigration policies. The health and safety of these children must be our priority.

As the influx in unaccompanied children transpires, there are numerous humanitarian groups across the southwest border offering their support to assure these children receive humane treatment. I request that they are allowed to provide assistance and are permitted a role in independent oversight. They are invested in the well-being of these children who, by no fault of their own, are suffering the consequences of violence and extreme poverty in their home countries.

I am aware that Governor Brewer sent you a letter expressing her concerns regarding this serious issue. While some political discussions blame the influx of unaccompanied children on the lack of border security, I completely disagree. The humanitarian crisis being brought to light is the result of the political bigotry in Congress by Republicans who oppose immigration reform and are to this day blocking any meaningful reform or debate.

Once again, President Obama, I commend you for your leadership and urge you to ensure that the well-being of these children is central as you continue to collaborate with the inter-agency Unified Coordination Group designated to respond to this humanitarian crisis. I look forward to receiving requested information and working with you to ensure the well-being of these children.

Sincerely,

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress