

# STOP EXPLOITING MIGRANT CHILDREN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue sent the following letter to HHS Secretary Becerra asking him to stop the exploitation, and cover-up, of migrant children.

July 30, 2021

The Hon. Xavier Becerra  
Secretary for Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

According to recent whistleblowers, children living in HHS migrant shelters are living in subhuman conditions. That this is happening on your watch makes you at least partially culpable. I urge you to address this outrageous situation with all the resources available to you.

After enduring a long, arduous journey, these children are sent to camps where Covid is running rampant. In the girls' tents, lice is left untreated while the boys turn riotous because of the poor conditions they are forced to endure during their detainment at HHS facilities. Clean underwear for the children is practically unheard of in the shelters, and when contractors offered to show these children compassion by purchasing them new underwear, they were discouraged by a senior federal manager.

Further, we know that the probability these children were exposed to sexual abuse is very high because that is the nature of human trafficking. We cannot say for certain how many of these children had to endure such horrific acts because your department's response was to send federal

detainees with no background in child psychology to interview the minors to determine if they need special attention due to their history.

What is most upsetting is the cover-up that is underway. To be specific senior HHS officials have worked tirelessly to hide the neglect that these children have endured. This is something you have direct control over, yet there are no signs that you are taking this matter seriously. Those engaged in the cover-up need to be held accountable.

Reports indicate that HHS officials have coached federal detainees "to make everything sound positive... and down play anything negative" about the living conditions your department has provided for these children. A senior manager from the U.S. Public Health Service refused to share information about how many of these minors had Covid at an employee town hall for fear that information would appear in the media.

Not too long ago you lambasted several Catholic dioceses in California for a lack of transparency and failing to adequately report on the welfare of children, but now, your own department is actively engaging in deception with regards to the terrible treatment children are receiving while in HHS' care. This is nothing more than rank hypocrisy.

As the Attorney General of California, you portrayed yourself as a champion of the welfare of children, especially when it came to holding the Catholic Church responsible for crimes allegedly committed against adolescents nearly fifty years ago. You seemed to show much more vigor in your response to allegations made against the Archdiocese of Los Angeles even though most of these were well beyond the statute of limitations than you are for the present crisis on our border.

It is imperative that you act immediately to improve the living conditions for these innocent children.

Should your response to this request be less diligent than

your efforts to defame the Church, I will have no choice but to call for a thorough Congressional inquiry into the subhuman conditions HHS has subjected upon these minors. Time is of the essence, Mr. Secretary, after all we are talking about the welfare of innocent children.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.  
President