

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 18, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Derek Benner
Chief Executive Officer
Our Rescue
P.O. Box 57338
Salt Lake City, UT 84157

Sean Vassilaros
Chairman, Board of Directors
Our Rescue
P.O. Box 57338
Salt Lake City, UT 84157

Dear Mr. Benner and Chair Vassilaros:

We write to request records and information regarding the recent contract of up to \$244 million,¹ of which \$158.1 million has already been disbursed,² that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded your organization to “ensure the continuity of legal services for unaccompanied alien children.”³ This award is concerning given the incredible lack of details provided in the award notice, the nonexistence of legal services provided by your organization, the Trump Administration’s continued use of no-bid awards to steer taxpayer dollars to President Trump’s friends, family, and associates,⁴ and the Trump Administration’s staggering disregard for the welfare of children in immigration enforcement.⁵ We request that you immediately provide information and records to allow us to assess whether this contract is yet another waste of taxpayer dollars meant to harm migrant children.

Unaccompanied migrant children are a uniquely vulnerable population with unique legal needs both in Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) custody and once released. Those needs may include, but are not limited to, direct representation in legal proceedings; orientations on legal rights and the immigration process in the United States; and legal screenings to identify a child’s legal needs, rights, and options. These needs require effective advocates with a working knowledge of immigration law—a complex and intricate legal landscape that is constantly changing.

¹ Award Notice, *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement – Legal Services for Unaccompanied Alien Children*, SAM.GOV, (Aug. 7, 2026), available at: <https://sam.gov/workspace/contract/opp/3994b176dd184f02b72b043594ea419f/view>.

² Contract Summary, USASPENDING.GOV, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_7571MN26C00029_7571_-NONE-_NONE-.

³ *Supra*, note 1.

⁴ *See, e.g.*, Letter from the Hon. Richard Blumenthal, Ranking Member, S. Permanent Subcomm. on Investigations to the Hon. Doug Burgum, Sec. of the Interior, and Jessica Bowron, Acting Director, NPS (June 9, 2026), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026-06-09-Letter-from-Ranking-Member-Blumenthal-toSecretary-Burgum-and-Acting-Director-Bowron.pdf>.

⁵ *See, e.g.*, Press Release, Blumenthal Delivers Opening Statement at Forum on How DHS Policies Hurt Children (March 24, 2026), <https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/videoblumenthal-deliversopening-statement-at-forum-on-how-dhs-policies-hurt-children>.

Unfortunately, Our Rescue is not a legal services provider. A review of your public-facing materials confirms this, revealing no mention of providing legal services to unaccompanied migrant children, nor even to survivors of human trafficking or child exploitation in the United States.⁶ While your organization's stated mission of combatting human trafficking and child exploitation is laudable, you appear to address those issues in the United States in ways that are different from legal representation. Thus, it gives us apprehension that your organization is potentially being tasked with administering essential legal services to children whose cases require highly specialized expertise.

Adding to that apprehension is the complete lack of detail on exactly what your organization's legal services will entail. Ensuring "the continuity of legal services for unaccompanied alien children"⁷ is vague and could mean the provision of legal services directly by your organization or referrals by your organization to other providers of legal services, or both. There is also no detail as to whether these services will be provided to unaccompanied migrant children only while they are in ORR custody or if legal services will be provided post-release as well.

Our Rescue's close ties to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raises additional questions about confidentiality regarding unaccompanied migrant children. Under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Congress deliberately assigned the care of and services for unaccompanied migrant children to ORR, wholly separate from the immigration enforcement functions the Act assigned to the Department of Homeland Security.⁸ This was done specifically to ensure that ORR functioned as a child welfare agency guided by unaccompanied migrant children's best interests rather than deportation quotas or other immigration enforcement priorities. Yet under the Trump Administration, ORR has increasingly abandoned this statutory mandate in service of ICE's enforcement agenda, including by routinely providing ICE formerly firewalled information about unaccompanied migrant children and their loved ones. On the basis of this information, ICE has arrested more than 12,000 unaccompanied migrant children and other individuals while sowing fear and panic in communities across the nation.⁹ In addition, from December 2025 to August 2026, ORR illegally refused to reimburse legal services providers under a prior contract unless they transmitted sensitive information to ORR about their clients that could have violated attorney-client privilege—information that ORR could then have imparted to ICE in turn. Only after a federal court ruled that these withheld payments contravened a standing preliminary injunction did ORR initiate repayments.¹⁰

⁶ See, e.g., https://ourrescue.org/?form=FUNNLSEFPYG&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=19639273605&gbraid=0AAAAAoc8JBHJfc7kNNG6YkFnnNt81tj05&gclid=EAIaIqobChMIhOjWq7-ZlgMVU4rCCB0-VjHgEAAAYASAAEgJxyPD_BwE. (Materials reviewed include webpages, annual reports, and audited financials).

⁷ *Supra*, note 1.

⁸ P.L. 107-296.

⁹ Kristina Cooke, "Thousands of children, sponsors, arrested after tips from US child migrant agency" Reuters (Jul. 28, 2026) available at: <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/thousands-children-sponsors-arrested-by-ice-after-tips-us-child-migrant-agency-2026-07-28/>.

Given these historical facts, Mr. Benner's nexus to ICE as the former leader of ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and the lack of a publicly available description of the contract, we must ask exactly what information on unaccompanied migrant children Our Rescue may have agreed to provide to ORR. It is critical that Our Rescue and ORR maintain transparency about any information-sharing the contract requires.

So that we can understand why Our Rescue is qualified to receive up to \$244 million servicing unaccompanied migrant children, and exactly what the contract entails, please provide the following information by September 1, 2026:

1. Please provide an overview of what "continuity of legal services for unaccompanied alien children" entails;
2. Please indicate whether "continuity of legal services for unaccompanied alien children" encompasses children detained in ORR custody or children released from ORR custody, or both;
3. Please indicate whether Our Rescue will be directly providing legal services to unaccompanied alien children;
4. Will Our Rescue be subcontracting to legal services providers or otherwise referring cases to a network of such providers?
 - a. Please identify all existing and planned subcontractors or other organizations with which Our Rescue will partner to implement this contract;
5. Please provide the number of attorneys currently employed by Our Rescue with an active bar license and for each attorney the jurisdiction in which they are barred;
6. Please list any attorneys at Our Rescue who have ever participated in an immigration proceeding in any capacity;
7. Please list any experience and qualifications among Our Rescue attorneys in providing trauma-informed representation to unaccompanied migrant children;
8. Please provide a list of Our Rescue's current office locations;
9. Please indicate whether Our Rescue will be fulfilling the terms of its contract virtually or in person; and

¹⁰ Dennis Valera, "Judge orders federal government to pay \$65M to legal service providers for migrant children" CBS News (Aug. 7, 2026): <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/judge-orders-65m-payout-migrant-children-legal-services>

10. Please describe what information, if any, Our Rescue will provide to ORR and/or ICE concerning unaccompanied migrant children clients and their cases in performance of this contract

- a. Please share Our Rescue's analysis of why any such information-sharing does or does not violate attorney-client privilege or other ethical considerations under the bar codes of all states in which Our Rescue will administer legal service pursuant to the contract.

Please also provide us with the following records¹¹ by September 1, 2026:

1. All records regarding the solicitation of the \$244 million to ensure continuity of legal services for unaccompanied alien children;
2. All communications¹² regarding the awarding of the \$244 million contract and the disbursement of the \$158.1 million, including but not limited to communications with the Executive Office of the President, President Trump, the Department of Health and Human Services, Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr.; and
3. All communications regarding how clients will be serviced in locations where Our Rescue personnel and/or attorneys are not located.

Sincerely,



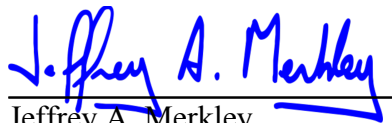
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

¹¹ For purposes of this request, "records" include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (emails, email attachments, and any other electronically-created or stored information), direct messages, chats, calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether or not they resulted in final documents).

¹² For purposes of this request, "communications" include any records, as defined above, transmitted in any way between two or more individuals or entities.



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator