



MARK E. OJAKIAN
CHIEF OF STAFF
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

July 18, 2014

Representative Juan Candelaria
Chairman, Black and Puerto Rican Caucus
Legislative Office Building, Room 1804
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairman Candelaria:

Thank you for your letter to the Governor dated July 17, 2014. The Governor's heart goes out to all of the children affected by this situation. We have taken federal requests for assistance extremely seriously, and will continue to do so. We also stand ready to meet with you and discuss in greater detail what role the State is playing to aid in this crisis.

The State was first contacted by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) as well as the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS) beginning on July 3. The request for assistance was quite narrow. Among other requirements, the agencies were seeking facilities that contained no less than 90,000 square feet of open space, which needed to be ready and available for immediate use. The facilities also needed to be ADA and NEPA compliant, with additional outside space as needed for trailers that hold showers, restrooms, and kitchens. As has been reported, GSA made specific inquiries into whether the Southbury Training School might fit these needs.

The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) undertook a review of Southbury and all other vacant state property to determine whether or not the request was at all feasible. All vacant properties owned by the State were found to be either far too small to accommodate the needs of GSA and HHS, were not ADA or NEPA compliant, and/or they contained mold, asbestos, lead, or other serious problems which would require extensive renovation before they could be occupied (especially by children).

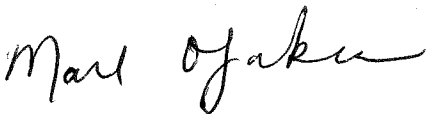
The decision OPM made was based on a factual review of state assets weighed against a list of specific criteria, including urgent time constraints. The State of Connecticut simply does not own appropriate facilities that can accommodate these needs.

Here's what we're doing to help. OPM Secretary Ben Barnes and Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families Joette Katz will be coordinating with federal counterparts to facilitate, where possible, the temporary placements of individual unaccompanied minors who have family relations in Connecticut. In addition, the administration is working to provide more direct support to families who have expressed an interest in providing aid for affected children.

These efforts reflect our belief that the best placement for any child is first and foremost with family, and that congregate or institutional settings should be avoided wherever possible. They also reflect our recognition of the very real national need to house these children while their cases are being processed. That's why the Governor supports the \$3.7 billion emergency supplemental funding requested by the President, and why he urges Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform.

Thank you again for your letter. Please expect a call from our office to find a workable time to meet in person and discuss these important concerns in greater detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Ojakian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Ojakian" clearly distinguishable.

Mark Ojakian
Chief of Staff

CC: Members of the Connecticut General Assembly, Black and Puerto Rican Caucus