

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 10, 2014

Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary of Health & Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell:

I am writing to express the shared concerns of the mayors of Bryan and College Station, the superintendent of the Bryan Independent School District, Texas state senator Charles Schwertner, Texas state representatives John Raney and Kyle Kacal, and the many constituents within the 17th Congressional district of Texas (Texas 17). Together, they have written me to request that I work with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to make sure that U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) facilities within Brazos County, Texas are not utilized to house any unaccompanied alien children (UAC's).

It is my understanding that Brazos County DOD sites are being evaluated for the potential housing of UAC's. While I realize the important humanitarian role the federal agencies must play in this ongoing crisis along our southern border, it is important to weigh and determine the potential rippling effects that housing these foreign children in our local communities can present.

The housing of UAC's in Texas' civilian communities can pose substantial health risks for our communities. In addition to health care concerns, there are other basic social services to consider, such as education needs, which are paid for by my constituents and local governments within the Brazos County area. As the numbers of UAC's continue to rapidly increase on a daily basis, I echo these concerns from Brazos County local officials and I have included the letters from these elected leaders as attachments hereto.

It is my request that HHS discontinue considering any facilities in Brazos County. In addition, I ask for a written response to confirm which sites within Texas that HHS is currently considering. Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response. Should you have any questions on this matter, please contact Jordan Ballard in my Washington office at 202.225.6105 or Jordan.Ballard@mail.house.gov.

With great respect,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Flores". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bill Flores
Member of Congress
WHF/jb

c: Governor Rick Perry, Texas
Senator John Cornyn, Texas
Senator Ted Cruz, Texas



July 3, 2014

The Honorable Rick Perry
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Perry:

As mayor of the City of College Station, I'm extremely concerned about the possibility of the U.S. Army Reserve Center in Bryan being used to house unaccompanied children immigrating across our country's southern border. Considering Bryan's close proximity to College Station, such an influx would have detrimental effects on both communities.

Although we recognize the scope and magnitude of this humanitarian crisis, and empathize with the plight of these unfortunate children, our community is simply not equipped to adequately handle this population. The stress placed on our educational system and economy, along with the potential impact on the health and safety of our citizens, would be unacceptable. Moreover, it is my understanding that other communities have offered the necessary resources and are better suited to sustain these children.

We deeply appreciate your past support for our community and respectfully request your intervention to prevent the Bryan facility from being used as a shelter.

Sincerely,

Nancy F. Berry
Mayor, City of College Station



State Representative John Raney
House District 14

State Senator Charles Schwertner
Senate District 5

State Representative Kyle Kacal
House District 12

July 3, 2014

The Honorable Rick Perry
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Governor Perry,

Recently, the United States General Services Administration notified the City of Bryan that a vacant U.S. Army Reserve Center in Bryan is presently being considered for federal transfer to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services in order to address the unprecedented surge of illegal immigrants crossing the United States border.

While the specific intent of this proposal remains unclear at this time, many constituents and local elected officials have expressed concerns that HHS intends to use this facility for the screening and processing of these immigrants into the Bryan community. This is an extremely troubling prospect, and we feel strongly that a community such as Bryan lacks the necessary economic, educational, and healthcare resources to support a potentially open-ended influx of illegal immigrants. We acknowledge the humanitarian role that our government has to play in treating and caring for these individuals, but we feel strongly that role can be better discharged in a larger community with the tools and resources needed to adequately address this crisis.

We therefore write to request your assistance in urging the federal government to find a more suitable location to process these immigrants. On behalf of the citizens of Brazos County, we appreciate any assistance you can provide in this matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John Raney in black ink.

John Raney
State Representative
House District 14

Handwritten signature of Charles Schwertner in black ink.

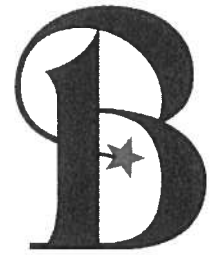
Charles Schwertner
State Senator
Senate District 5

Handwritten signature of Kyle Kacal in black ink.

Kyle Kacal
State Representative
House District 12

July 3, 2014

The Honorable Rick Perry
Governor of Texas
Post Office Box 12428
Austin, TX 78711-2428



CITY OF BRYAN
The Good Life, Texas Style.™

Office of the Mayor

Dear Governor Perry:

There is a vacant U.S. Army Reserve Center on Carson Street in Bryan, Texas. The facility was vacated almost a year ago as a new facility was constructed. The property for the old facility once belonged to the City of Bryan and based on decades old agreements, this property is to revert to the City once the military vacated the premises. While this process has taken much longer than anticipated, we recently learned another use may take priority over the transfer back to the City.

We have been informed the U.S. Army Reserve Center will be offered as a possible facility to house unaccompanied minors crossing the United States borders. So instead of the City of Bryan possibly taking back ownership of the Carson Street property, a Federal Transfer is being considered. This option is unacceptable to the City of Bryan and we respectfully request your assistance.

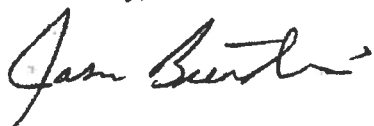
The community does not have the resources to support an influx of unaccompanied minors. For example, the Bryan Independent School District includes 75 percent disadvantaged students, which already puts a strain on the education system. While the plan may be to use the Reserve Center as a temporary holding facility, we anticipate many of the unaccompanied children being in the area during the school year and anticipate the Bryan ISD, and possibly the College Station ISD, being the district(s) responsible for educating them.

We are a diverse community with the Bryan ISD well representing the State's demographics with a student population of 53% Hispanic, 25% White, 20% Black, and 2% Other. Adding unaccompanied minors could put a tremendous strain on the community. We have a large senior/retired population on fixed incomes, and we have a large college/university student population, a group that is historically classified as "under employed" in terms of per capita income. As we attempt to address this challenge, adding unaccompanied minors only complicates the issue.

Setting aside the education and economic impact to the community, health and safety also are concerns. Introducing unaccompanied minors into a community the size of Bryan-College Station could tax the health community to an undesirable limit. Additionally, we are responsible for the safety of our citizens and visitors. In that respect, we wonder how the Reserve Center can be home for unaccompanied minors or "visitors" when just last year the facility was not considered functional for the military. We assume many upgrades and improvements will be necessary before the facility can function as housing.

Your assistance is humbly requested to address this concern. We understand some communities are preparing for the arrival of unaccompanied minors; we highly encourage those areas to be considered as appropriate locations for the minors. Again, the Bryan community is not prepared to accept unaccompanied minors. The Reserve Center property should continue its transfer path to the City of Bryan as agreed to several years ago. If you need more information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Jason P. Bienski
Mayor, City of Bryan

cc: William H. "Bill" Flores, U.S. House of Representatives, 17th District of Texas
Dr. Charles J. Schwertner, Texas Senator, 5th District
John N. Raney, Texas Representative, 14th District
Kyle Kacal, Texas Representative, 12th District
City of Bryan City Council
Dr. Thomas A. "Tommy" Wallis, Superintendent, Bryan Independent School District

Dr. Thomas A. Wallis
Superintendent



Children First, Always...
The Bryan Way

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

July 2014

Dear Secretary Burwell,

As superintendent of Bryan ISD, located in central Texas, I am writing with grave concerns that some of the unaccompanied minors entering the U.S. may be transferred to our local U.S. Army Reserve Center. The Reserve Center was being decommissioned and its ownership transferred to the City of Bryan, but we have recently been informed that the decommissioning process has been halted as the Department of Health and Human Services evaluates the facility to address overcrowding along the border.

While our hearts are with the many young people who have traveled far from home without their parents, as an educator I must also weigh the risks and challenges associated with moving a large population of immigrant students to our community overnight.

I simply cannot overstate the potential impact of adding up to several hundred non-English speaking students to a district that is 75 percent economically disadvantaged and understaffed with bilingual teachers.

We lack the number of bilingual educators needed to fully service the 53 percent Hispanic population in our district as it stands now, and ballooning our limited English population in an instant could cause a catastrophic staffing situation that would further stretch, and even violate, staffing laws with respect to non-English speaking or limited English speaking students.

Furthermore, with regard to physical space in our classrooms, we are in the midst of considering a bond proposal to address our crowded schools, where many students have been moved to portable buildings—a “temporary” fix that has lingered for many years. We lack the physical space to educate hundreds more without incorporating that growth in a long-term strategic plan, construction and financing.

The children of Bryan ISD are making significant academic gains, after years of struggle, and we are in the midst of implementing a long range strategic plan aimed at continuing that success and building facilities to modernize and accommodate growth.

District and community resources are already stretched to the extreme, and we simply cannot adequately support hundreds more people in need overnight. Bloomberg recently reported that Bryan/College Station has the greatest concentration of very poor people in the nation. Both the city and the school district are in the midst of overcoming such real or perceived challenges by attracting new businesses, incentivizing new construction and, at the district level, planning for the future and meeting or exceeding state standards.

We cannot risk such progress and gains by our students and our community, and I would ask that you consider other options for seeing to the needs of the unaccompanied minors along the Texas border.

Respectfully,



Thomas A. Wallis, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Bryan ISD

CC:

Barak Obama, President of the United States
Rick Perry, Governor of Texas
Susan Combs, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
Bill Flores, U.S. Rep. 17th District of Texas
Michael Williams, Texas Commissioner of Education
Charles Schwertner, Texas Senator 5th District
John Raney, Texas Representative 14th District
Kyle Kacal, Texas Representative 12th District
Bryan City Council
Bryan ISD Board of Trustees