

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

September 13, 2021

The Honorable Kiran Ahuja
Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Washington, D.C. 20415

Dear Director Ahuja:

The purpose of this letter is to request further information on the effect the border crisis has had on the U.S. federal workforce. As you are aware, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) solicited volunteers, in coordination with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), from across the federal government on March 25, 2021 to serve up to 120-day deployment details to assist with caring for unaccompanied alien children (UAC) during an unprecedented situation precipitated by the border crisis.¹ Despite my attempt to obtain information related to the effect of these details on the federal workforce and the missions of sending agencies/departments, OPM has not adequately responded to my request.

On April 21, 2021, I wrote to OPM requesting information related to federal workforce detailees assigned to assist HHS with caring for UAC.² In addition to data on the number of reimbursable details, I also requested “[a]ll documents and communications containing an analysis of the impact of such details on the sending agencies/departments and performance of the volunteer’s original duties.”³ However, to date I have not received this information from OPM or any other federal government entity.

Instead, on May 5, 2021, former Acting Director Kathleen M. McGettigan responded to my April 21, 2021 letter with a single paragraph response referring me to the original job announcement and indicating without elaboration that OPM coordinated with HHS.⁴ No additional documents and communications containing any analysis of the impact of such details on the agencies/departments sending detailees have been provided. Therefore, I can only assume

¹ Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies from Kathleen M. McGettigan, Acting Director, U.S. Off. of Personnel Mgmt. re: Detail Opportunity (Mar. 25, 2021), available at <https://chcoc.gov/content/detail-opportunity-information-departmentagency-leadership>.

² Letter from Jody Hice, Ranking Member, H. Subcommittee on Gov’t Operations, to Kathleen M. McGettigan, Acting Dir., U.S. Off. of Personnel Mgmt. (April 21, 2021), available at <https://republicans-oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Letter-to-OPM-from-Hice-04212021.pdf>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Letter from Kathleen M. McGettigan, Acting Dir., U.S. Off. of Personnel Mgmt., to Jody Hice, Ranking Member, H. Subcommittee on Gov’t Operations (May 5, 2021), *on file with committee staff*.

that such an analysis was not contemplated by OPM—before, during, or after the detailees’ deployments.

It strains belief that these details would not have significant effects on federal detailees and operations at their home agencies/departments, and I am dismayed that OPM appears to have performed no analysis of these impacts. According to information from HHS, as of May 19, 2021 at the peak of the program, there were as many as 1,346 federal detailees serving in case-management and line-of-sight supervision tasks at HHS sites housing UAC across the country.⁵ As of August 23, 2021, there were still 194 federal detailees deployed to HHS’s UAC facilities.⁶ Details last in duration from 30 days to 120 days, with many workers working 12-hour shifts, 7 days a week.⁷ HHS was unable, however, to provide information adequate to assure me that detailees’ physical and mental health and wellness were adequately planned for, monitored and protected and that sending agencies’ mission-fulfillment was not unduly impacted by detailees’ absences from their normal duties. In short, to date OPM’s detailee program appears to be just another example of the Biden Administration provoking a crisis without adequately planning for or assuring the well-being of those whom the crisis would affect.

To assist the Subcommittee in exercising oversight of the effect of the border crisis on the federal workforce and agency missions overall, please provide a staff-level briefing no later than September 20, 2021 to address OPM’s assessment of the ramifications of these details from federal agencies and departments. Also, I reiterate my April 21, 2021 requests for information:

1. The total number of federal employees who have volunteered for a reimbursable detail with HHS as outlined in the March 25, 2021 memorandum, disaggregated by federal agency/department, permanent job title, and expected length of detail.
2. All documents and communications containing an analysis of the impact of such details on the sending agencies/departments and performance of the volunteer’s original duties.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. To make arrangements to schedule a briefing, deliver documents, or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican Staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal legislative committee having jurisdiction over “Federal civil service, including intergovernmental personnel” under House Rule X. Additionally, the

⁵ Briefing by HHS to H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform Staff (Aug. 24, 2021).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

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Committee has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time,” also provided under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Jody Hice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations

cc: The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations