



## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504

<http://feinstein.senate.gov>

July 24, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen,

I am increasingly concerned by reports about poor conditions at Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facilities along the Southwest border.<sup>1</sup> As such, I have directed my staff to visit all CBP facilities in California where the agency is detaining individuals on immigration-related grounds, with a priority to visit those facilities that hold children.

On Friday, July 20, 2018, two members of my staff visited the El Centro Border Patrol station and reported sub-standard conditions and violations of CBP policy. Unaccompanied minors had been detained in a room for up to five days, in possible violation of the Trafficking Victims and Protection Reauthorization Act; single adults, including asylum seekers, had been held for up to 10 days, notwithstanding CBP policy that migrants should not be kept in holding facilities for longer than 72 hours. Family units with children as young as three were sleeping on the concrete floor with no padding. Detainees, including juveniles, did not have adequate access to drinking water and lacked basic hygiene products. A room for adult men was filled beyond maximum capacity to the point where detainees could not even spread out on the floor. It appears that El Centro is not equipped to handle the number of detainees currently there, and I am concerned that similar conditions may exist at other CBP temporary detention facilities.

In support of the oversight functions of the Senate Judiciary Committee, as well as to inform our ongoing efforts to legislate changes to the immigration system, I ask that my staff be allowed timely and full access to additional CBP locations as soon as possible. I also request that your Department provide the total number of detainees in DHS custody, with a breakdown of the numbers at each facility located in California, whether operated by DHS or under DHS contract. If available, please also include the most recent average length of detention system-wide, broken down by demographic groups to include Unaccompanied Alien Children and Family Units.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, “*Migrants Allege They Were Subjected To Dirty Detention Facilities, Bad Food And Water*” NPR, July 18, 2018; “*Migrants in U.S. custody describe life in 'ice boxes' and 'dog pounds'*” Reuters, July 18, 2018.

I appreciate your immediate attention to the claims of mistreatment of migrants in DHS facilities, which have now unfortunately been corroborated by members of my staff. I hope that we will be able to work together to put in place a statutory framework that prohibits the separation of children from their parents and ensures that DHS has the resources needed to implement a humane, effective immigration system.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

cc: Kevin K. McAleenan, Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
John V. Kelly, Acting Inspector General, U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Members, Senate Judiciary Committee

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