

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** Mary Alice Carter, Executive Director of Equity Forward

**Date:** June 5, 2018

**Re:** Trump is Breaking Up Families – Where are Sec. Azar & Scott Lloyd?

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The nation has been horrified by the Trump administration's policy of separating children of immigrants from their families. What hasn't gotten as much attention is that affected children are then likely placed in the care of a troubled, ill-equipped office at the Department of Health and Human Services. While there is widespread outrage at the separation policy, HHS Secretary Alex Azar and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) - the office headed by embattled anti-abortion activist Scott Lloyd - have been silent on their role in executing the policy.

*"The press office for the children and families division at HHS, which the resettlement office is part of, did not respond to a call and email seeking comment overnight."* – [The Washington Post's](#) James Hohmann

Given Azar and Lloyd's prominent role facilitating the policy of breaking up families, why aren't they explaining their role to Congress, the American people and the media?

At Equity Forward, we filed multiple FOIA requests for records related to ORR's handling of people in their care. HHS has consistently stonewalled our requests, and failed to comply with open records laws. And when we took [HHS to court](#), the agency claimed it would take up to [28 years](#) to provide relevant emails.

To date, this powerful agency has refused to answer basic questions about its operations and how it oversees the program, including:

*How many children have been separated from their families? Where will they be housed?*

*What safeguards are being put in place to ensure that an evolving population of ever-younger children are being treated appropriately?*

*How will HHS work to reunite children with their parents as quickly as possible, and inform stakeholders about its progress? How long will these children be in custody?*

*Who is providing oversight of the private contractors running detention facilities where children are being detained?*

**While we don't have answers to these important questions about HHS and ORR's conduct, we do have plenty of reasons to be concerned about their record under the Trump administration.**

### **SCOTT LLOYD'S TROUBLING RECORD**

ORR Director [Scott Lloyd](#) is a veteran anti-abortion activist with no meaningful experience dealing with vulnerable populations. Read Equity Forward's full profile on Lloyd [HERE](#).

As Director, Lloyd has become infamous not for his work supporting refugees, but for violating the civil rights of children in his care. As soon as Lloyd took the helm of ORR, he became the final sign off for any young woman in ORR custody seeking an abortion. But, he didn't just review a summary of each young woman's case. He stood in the way of them accessing care when he personally visited the women, intervened to refer them to anti-abortion centers so they would be counseled against the procedure, and went so far as to demand a weekly spreadsheet that tracked the status of each young woman's pregnancy. These actions that have been [repeatedly blocked](#) by the court.

Despite his lack of experience and controversial track record, he additionally required that he have final sign off for the release of certain children from ORR facilities, indefinitely stranding them in detention, a decision that triggered another [lawsuit on behalf of children](#) who have been indeterminately delayed from reuniting with family.

### **ORR IS ILL-EQUIPPED TO CARE FOR INFLUX OF CHILDREN**

Even before the administration doubled down on separation, ORR was overwhelmed with children, and had relaxed its vetting standards for sponsors. The number of children in its care only stands to balloon under the new family separation policy.

- In 2014, during the influx of unaccompanied children coming to the US following violence in Central America, ORR officials, [overwhelmed](#) by the volume of children, released some of them to labor traffickers taking advantage of the chaos. There is no indication that ORR has changed or fixed this problem.
- Since late April 2018, as the Trump administration's policy of separating children from parents came to light, the number of children in ORR custody has risen [21%](#). Shelters are

at 95% capacity (they were at [91% capacity](#) as of May 15), and HHS is scoping out [military bases](#) to house the influx of children it is expecting.

## **CONCLUSION**

The fact is that today we are left with more questions than answers about HHS and ORR's role in detaining children who the Trump Administration has separated from their parents. What we do know is that to date, HHS Secretary Alex Azar has failed to publicly address the issue and Scott Lloyd, an unqualified anti-reproductive health activist, is leading the agency tasked with caring for the children. It's now up to Congress, the media and citizens to continue to ask the tough questions and hold the Administration accountable for their conduct.