

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 12, 2019

The Honorable Kevin K. McAleenan  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane SW  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Joseph V. Cuffari  
Inspector General  
Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane SW  
Washington, DC 2052

Dear Secretary McAleenan and Inspector General Cuffari:

As members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, we write to express our dismay over recent news reports about the Washington State Attorney General's Office testimonials included in *State of Washington v. Donald Trump*. The testimonials brought to light allegations that adequate feminine hygiene products and access to bathing are not available in CBP facilities, exposing young girls to unsanitary and inhumane conditions. We demand a prompt and comprehensive investigation of these allegations and the responsible personnel, and we urge CBP to provide adequate sanitary products to young women and girls.

The Washington State Attorney General's Office interviewed migrant children who had been in CBP custody; they uncovered evidence of girls receiving only one sanitary pad a day during their menstrual cycle, and one girl was never offered a shower in the ten days she was detained.<sup>1</sup> The testimony stated that "although the guards knew they had their periods, they were not offered showers or a change of clothes, even when the other girl visibly bled through her pants. This girl had no choice but to continue to wear her soiled underwear and pants."<sup>2</sup>

It is the federal government's responsibility to uphold the human dignity of all women throughout the detention process. All women in detention should have readily available personal hygiene products, such as soap and feminine hygiene products, as well as the ability to properly handle and dispose of them. Each woman should have access to a hand washing station and the opportunity to bathe every day in a private and secure manner.

Not providing menstruating women with feminine hygiene products and a station to wash hands and bathe with soap is harmful to their health. Women who do not have access to appropriate feminine hygiene options are susceptible to a higher risk of contracting reproductive tract infections.<sup>3</sup> Most concerning, toxic shock syndrome may occur in situations where women and girls resort to makeshift products left in too long to support their unmet hygiene needs.<sup>4</sup> The negative health effects of poor

---

<sup>1</sup> Poletti, Alma. Washington State Attorney General's Office. (August 23, 2019) Retrieved from [https://agportal-s3bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/uploadedfiles/Another/News/Press\\_Releases/2019-08-23%20Poletti\\_Declaration\\_FloresCDCA\\_Washington\\_FINAL.pdf](https://agportal-s3bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/uploadedfiles/Another/News/Press_Releases/2019-08-23%20Poletti_Declaration_FloresCDCA_Washington_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Poletti, Alma. Washington State Attorney General's Office. (August 23, 2019) Retrieved from [https://agportal-s3bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/uploadedfiles/Another/News/Press\\_Releases/2019-08-23%20Poletti\\_Declaration\\_FloresCDCA\\_Washington\\_FINAL.pdf](https://agportal-s3bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/uploadedfiles/Another/News/Press_Releases/2019-08-23%20Poletti_Declaration_FloresCDCA_Washington_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Sumpter, Colin, et al. A Systematic Review of the Health and Social Effects of Menstrual Hygiene Management. PLoS One. 2013; 8(4): e62004. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3637379/>

<sup>4</sup> Berger, Selina, et al. Menstrual toxic shock syndrome: case report and systematic review of the literature. The Lancet: Infectious Disease. VOLUME 19, ISSUE 9, PE313-E321, SEPTEMBER 01, 2019. Retrieved from [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(19\)30041-6/fulltext#seccetitle140](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(19)30041-6/fulltext#seccetitle140)

hygiene extend beyond menstrual health. Lack of access to soap and water subjects them to an increased risk of infectious diseases like *norovirus*, *E. coli*, and *adenovirus*.

This is why we urge you to conduct an investigation into the allegations raised in the Washington State Attorney General's Office testimonials included in *State of Washington v. Donald Trump*. Specifically, we request answers to the following questions:

1. Why were young women and girls denied adequate feminine hygiene products to meet their needs while menstruating?
2. Why were young women and girls denied the ability to wash their hands?
3. Why were young women and girls denied the ability to bathe?
4. Why were young women and girls denied the ability to change their clothes?
5. Did the facility in question have enough feminine hygiene products?
6. Did the facility in question have enough soap?
7. What current written regulations does CBP have in place to protect the health of detained women and girls during their menstrual cycle?
8. Does CBP personnel receive training to understand the health needs of menstruating women and the consequences of poor hygiene during menstruation?
9. Does CBP personnel receive training to understand the health concerns of failing to provide the access to hand-washing and bathing products to women and girls during their menstrual cycle?
10. What were the lessons learned from the findings in the testimony?
11. What changes in policy and practices will you make to prevent this from ever happening again?

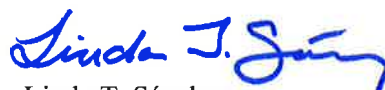
We must continue to adhere to our humanitarian values as a nation by treating children and families with dignity. This is why we demand a prompt and comprehensive investigation of these allegations with the responses to our questions by October 15, 2019.

Thank you for your attention to this critical and urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Chair  
Health Taskforce  
Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Linda T. Sánchez  
Chair  
Immigration Taskforce  
Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Joaquin Castro  
Chair  
Congressional Hispanic Caucus