



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL



MassGeneral Hospital
for Children



HARVARD
MEDICAL SCHOOL

July 10, 2020

Dear Mr. Caal Cuz,

I am a pediatrician who has been asked to testify at a Congressional hearing about the deaths of several children in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody, in hope that such tragedies may be prevented in future. In preparation for the hearing, I have reviewed witness statements and autopsy reports regarding your daughter Jakelin's death. I believe that you and your family deserve to learn the results of this review before they are released to the public.

As you know, your daughter passed away from complications of sepsis, an overwhelming bacterial infection that can cause the body's organs to stop working. Sepsis can be treated if a patient receives antibiotics in time, but every hour of delay in accessing medical care decreases the likelihood that treatment will be effective. Unfortunately, the border patrol agents at the forward operating base where Jakelin was apprehended did not conduct sufficient screening to identify her illness before the first bus left for the border patrol station. They also did not have adequate training to recognize how sick she was, and they did not call ahead to request that an ambulance meet your bus en route to the border patrol station. As a result, Jakelin did not arrive at the hospital until nearly 12 hours after she was apprehended and more than four hours after your request for medical attention. By the time antibiotics were finally administered, her disease had progressed too far and she could not be saved. Had she received more timely medical care, there is a chance that she could have survived.

I hope you know that what happened to Jakelin was not your fault. The law enforcement systems that should have protected her, failed her. I will do everything I can to advocate to Congress that the care provided to children at the US border must be improved, so that no other child meets a fate like Jakelin's.

I am so very sorry for your loss, and for all that you and your family have been through. Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely,

Fiona Danaher, MD, MPH, FAAP
Pediatrician, Massachusetts General Hospital Chelsea Pediatrics and Massachusetts General
Hospital Child Protection Team
Instructor, Harvard Medical School