Email Appears to Show DHS Wanted to Cut Check to Child Care Center Connected to 'Taliban Official'

Franson expressed frustration that investigators "are being treated like criminals while DHS is completely aware that corruption in CCAP is present."

By **Anthony Gockowski** - December 3, 2019

via The Minnesota Sun

SHARE THIS STORY

Officials in Minnesota's Department of Human Services (DHS) allegedly wanted to cut a new check to a child care center that had its bank account frozen by the Office of Foreign Asset Control because of the account owner's association "with a Taliban official," emails obtained by a state representative show.

Rep. Mary Franson (R-Alexandria) released a number of internal DHS emails she obtained through a data practices request. The Republican lawmaker uncovered a number of alarming trends in the emails, including the department's "cozy" relationship with an organization that conducts itself "like the mafia," Inspector General Carolyn Ham's continued paid leave from the department, and the agency's willingness to pay a child care center with possible connections to a "Taliban official."

Several acronyms are used throughout the emails and in Franson's observations. They include: OIG, which stands for Office of Inspector General (housed in DHS); OLA, which stands for Office of the Legislative Auditor; CCAP, which stands for Child Care Assistance Program; and MMCA, which stands for Minnesota Minority Child Care Association.

"Sitting on the couch going through data practice requests and it's very curious how the disgraced Carolyn Ham is still on paid leave from OIG," Franson said in a Twitter thread discussing the emails. "Carolyn Ham exercised poor judgment in not proactively sharing data on CCAP fraud with the OLA and in cozying up to the MMCA—an organization comprised of members with ties to fraudulent activity."

> CAROLYN HAM EXERCISED POOR JUDGEMENT IN NOT PROACTIVELY SHARING INTERNAL DATA ON CCAP FRAUD WITH THE OLA AND IN COZYING UP TO THE MINNESOTA CHILD CARE ASSOCIATION (MMCA) – AN ORGANIZATION COMPRISED OF MEMBERS WITH TIES TO FRAUDULENT ACTIVITY.
>
> — REP. MARY FRANSON (@REPMARYFRANSON) NOVEMBER 25, 2019

Carolyn Ham and the MMCA

Ham has been on paid "investigative leave" since March, and as of July an investigation into her conduct had yet to even begin. Ham was placed on leave after an OLA report confirmed that millions of dollars in government payments went to fraudulent child care centers under CCAP.

As inspector general—the only one in the state—Ham is responsible for investigating DHS-managed programs, like CCAP.

According to Franson, Ham showed "more interest in managing political ramifications of fraud than making sure fraud itself was investigated."

For example, days before *Fox 9* was set to break its infamous story exposing child care fraud, Ham suggested giving MMCA a "heads up" in order to "build a little trust."

"I am wondering if we should give the Minnesota Minority Child Care Association a heads up that [redacted] is likely running a story on child care fraud, perhaps focused on Africa or payments sent overseas. I think it might help to build a little trust if they were not blindsided by the story," Ham wrote in an email to her colleagues.

> IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE IF CAROLYN HAM WOULD HAVE UPDATED THE LEGISLATURE ON FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS INSTEAD SHE WENT TO MMCA AND KIDS COUNT (ANOTHER LEFTY ORGANIZATION) – PLUS THEY DISCUSSED

CONSEQUENCES FOR POLITICAL AGENDAS. (WONDER WHAT THAT DISCUSSION ENTAILED) PIC.TWITTER.COM/R9XOMV4OBS

— REP. MARY FRANSON (@REPMARYFRANSON) NOVEMBER 25, 2019

AND WHEN THE BIG 100,000,000 STORY WAS GOING TO BREAK?? OUR VERY OWN CAROLYN HAM WANTED TO GIVE A HEADS UP TO MMCA TO BUILD TRUST BECAUSE THEY ARE AN "IMPORTANT PARTNER" WITH DHS. PIC.TWITTER.COM/5AZPXEW92N

— REP. MARY FRANSON (@REPMARYFRANSON) NOVEMBER 25, 2019

Another email shows that Ham met with members of the MMCA and an organization called Kids Count to give them an update on "fraud investigations within the child care assistance program."

"Her office is working with members of the Somali community and Somali child care providers, as well as with the Minnesota Minority Child Care Association, and Kids Count to address this issue and its consequences for political agendas," said a memo from the meeting.

Franson claims that Isaak Geedi, founder and chairman of MMCA, was sanctioned by DHS for fraud but continued to meet with Ham. Emails show that an unidentified reporter reached out to DHS in June 2018 seeking more information on Geedi's relationship with DHS, but the reporter was met with a two-sentence response.

"As inspector general, I have met with the Minnesota Minority Child Care Association board several times. I have no memory or record of meeting alone with Mr. Geedi in his capacity as chairman of the MMCA board," Ham replied, according to the emails.

Geedi, however, allegedly claimed that he met with Ham on "at least three occasions."

In other emails, a DHS official described the MMCA as an "important partner," but Franson believes the group runs itself "like the mafia."

One email obtained by Franson claims that MMCA pressured child care centers to join their organization and warned them that they "would be in trouble" if they didn't join. MMCA officials allegedly demanded $1,200 per month in dues from its members. If they didn't comply or refused to join, the MMCA would then threaten to falsely report them for fraud to DHS.

MINNESOTA MINORITY CHILD CARE ASSOCIATION (MMCA) – THE ONE DHS CLAIMS IS AN "IMPORTANT PARTNER"? THEY RUN THEIR ORGANIZATION LIKE THE MAFIA. JOIN OUR GROUP OR ELSE ... AND OH, PAY US $1200 PER MONTH OR QUARTER.

> OH MY – A PAYMENT TO A CENTER WAS KICKED BACK BY THE BANK DUE TO THE CENTERS ACCOUNT BEING FROZEN BY THE OFFICE OF FOREIGN ASSET CONTROL. WHY? IT APPEARS THE OWNER IS ASSOCIATED WITH A TALIBAN OFFICAL. NO BIGGIE THOUGH – DHS IS ON IT — JUST CUT THEM A NEW CHECK. PIC.TWITTER.COM/6O8G7PWZON
>
> — REP. MARY FRANSON (@REPMARYFRANSON) NOVEMBER 25, 2019

DHS HAS A WEIRD IMPORTANT PARTNER HERE PIC.TWITTER.COM/QAGR4OVWWK

— REP. MARY FRANSON (@REPMARYFRANSON) NOVEMBER 25, 2019

I just left a meeting at DHS. Within the last few days DHS sent an electronic payment to [redacted] We have been advised that the payment was kicked back by the subjects bank (don't have the account info yet) due to the centers account being frozen by OFAC (Office of Foreign Asset Control). [redacted] it appears the owner of the child care center is associated with a Taliban official, which is why the account was ordered frozen.

DHS is considering mailing a check for that amount to the child care center (assuming they don't receive a court order directing them to do otherwise). The amount is approx. $24,000. Is that an issue, or are you aware of anyone at the federal level that is willing to take steps to direct DHS to do something else?

On a side note, [redacted] DHS issued a temporary immediate suspension of that child care centers license, because we have been made aware of an ownership dispute, and it is unclear who is running the place.

Franson questioned why Ham and other DHS officials were "acting as a community liaison."

"This doesn't seem like a normal relationship. One meeting they met with ISAIAH and MMCA on a Saturday," said Franson.

'Taliban Official'

Another email obtained through Franson's request shows that DHS considered mailing a check to a child care center that had its account frozen by the Office of Foreign Asset Control.

"It appears the owner of the child care center is associated with a Taliban official, which is why the account was ordered frozen," states the email. "DHS is considering mailing a check for that amount to the child care center (assuming they don't receive a court order directing them to do otherwise). The amount is approx. $24,000. Is that an issue, or are you aware of anyone at the federal level that is willing to take steps to direct DHS to do something else?"

> I just left a meeting at DHS. Within the last few days DHS sent an electronic payment to [redacted] We have been advised that the payment was kicked back by the subjects bank (don't have the account info yet) due to the centers account being frozen by OFAC (Office of Foreign Asset Control). [redacted] it appears the owner of the child care center is associated with a Taliban official, which is why the account was ordered frozen.
>
> DHS is considering mailing a check for that amount to the child care center (assuming they don't receive a court order directing them to do otherwise). The amount is approx. $24,000. Is that an issue, or are you aware of anyone at the federal level that is willing to take steps to direct DHS to do something else?
>
> On a side note, [redacted] DHS issued a temporary immediate suspension of that child care centers license, because we have been made aware of an ownership dispute, and it is unclear who is running the place.

Franson expressed frustration that investigators "are being treated like criminals while DHS is completely aware that corruption in CCAP is present."

"Also, every employee that is lying about the fraud, covering it up and/or brushing it off needs to be fired," she said.

Franson plans to address the issues raised in the emails during a December 2 House Health and Human Services Committee hearing with DHS Commissioner Jodi Harpstead.

– – –

Anthony Gockowski is managing editor of ***Battleground State News, The Ohio Star,*** and ***The Minnesota Sun****. Follow Anthony on Twitter. Email tips to anthony.gockowski@gmail.com.*

The Minnesota Sun

This article has been republished with permission from the Minnesota Sun

SHARE THIS STORY

Anthony Gockowski

Website

Anthony Gockowski is Editor-in-Chief of Alpha News. He previously worked as an editor for The Minnesota Sun and Campus Reform, and wrote for the Daily Caller.