Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 4, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable David Venturella
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Secretary Mullin and Acting Director Venturella:

We write to request more information about troubling reports that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has lowered standards for detention facilities at the request of private, for-profit contractors operating the facilities. According to reporting from the Washington Post, the private prison operator, GEO Group, requested that ICE remove language in its detention standards requiring contractors to follow state and local laws regarding the treatment of detained people.[1] The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) confirmed that it consulted with private prison operators when changing the standards and that both GEO Group and CoreCivic were consulted on the changes.[2]

Private contractors like GEO and CoreCivic have benefitted significantly from the massive expansion of immigration detention under the Trump Administration. Both companies reported a 13 percent increase in revenue in 2025, accounting for $2 billion in additional profits for each company.[3] Numerous high-level immigration officials, including border czar Tom Homan and Acting ICE Director David Venturella, are former GEO employees.[4] Similarly, GEO Group has hired numerous high level ICE officials, including Dan Bible and Matthew Albence.[5]

The revolving door between GEO Group and ICE, coupled with the news that DHS is now consulting with private contractors about the standards that govern them raises significant questions regarding a conflict of interest. GEO Group is currently facing lawsuits in Washington, Colorado, and California regarding its policy to pay detained people who work at its facilities for $1 per day.[6] Washington has already won in court multiple times, with the Ninth Circuit finding that GEO Group's policy had led to its "unjust enrichment."[7] Now, in an apparent attempt to help GEO Group's defense in these lawsuits, ICE has removed provisions in its detention standards that require private contractors to comply with state and local wage and

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[1] Douglas MacMillan, *ICE removed detainee protections after private outreach from top contractor*, WASH. POST (Jun. 16, 2026), https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2026/06/16/ice-removed-detainee-protections-after-private-outreach-top-contractor/.
[2] *Id.*
[3] *'If You Can Keep It': The Private Companies Profiting Off ICE*, NPR (Fe. 23, 2026), https://www.npr.org/2026/02/23/nx-s1-5724008/if-you-can-keep-it-the-private-companies-profiting-off-ice.
[4] MacMillan, *supra* note 1.
[5] Nick Schwellenbach & René Kladzyk, *Private Prison Giant Hired ICE Detention Chief*, POGO (Jan. 17, 2025), https://www.pogo.org/investigates/private-prison-giant-hired-ice-detention-chief.
[6] McKenzie Funk, *An ICE Contractor Is Worth Billions. It's Still Fighting to Pay Detainees as Little as $1 a Day to Work*, PROPUBLICA (Mar. 19, 2025), https://www.propublica.org/article/geo-group-ice-detainees-wage.
[7] *Id.*

labor laws.[8] ICE's detention standards cannot override state and local laws, yet that does not make these changes any less concerning.

The level of consultation alleged in the *Post*'s reporting is unprecedented and inappropriate. Detention standards are meant to guide the entities operating immigration detention centers – they should not be written by them. And yet, it appears that that is precisely what occurred here. At a time when there are numerous documented cases of abuse and neglect within the immigration detention system, when deaths of detained people, including at least one homicide, have more than doubled from previous years, and when the oversight mechanisms within the system have been gutted, we should not be lowering detention standards, especially not to pad the bottom line of companies getting rich off of taxpayer funds and human suffering.[9]

Since the beginning of the Trump administration, over 400,000 people were arrested within the interior of the country and sent to immigration detention – straining an already deeply flawed system to the breaking point.[10] Across the country, detained people have complained of inadequate medical care, spoiled food, overcrowded cells, and physical beatings.[11] Guards beat one teenager so badly, he had to be hospitalized.[12] Pregnant women have miscarried inside detention centers because of the appalling conditions, with some reporting receiving no medical care after miscarrying.[13] Some detained people reported being forced to sleep on the floor due to overcrowding.[14] Since Donald Trump took office, 56 people have died in immigration detention, a higher number of deaths than the previous five years combined.[15] Recent investigations indicate that many of these deaths were preventable, driven by understaffing, substandard medical care, and DHS policies that keep people locked up long after they should have been

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[8] MacMillan, *supra* note 1.
[9] *See*, *e.g.*, Heddy Gassama, Det*ained Immigrants Detail Physical Abuse and Inhumane Conditions at Largest Immigration Detention Center in the U.S*. ACLU (Dec. 8, 2025, updated Apr. 13, 2026), https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/detained-immigrants-detail-physical-abuse-and-inhumane-conditions-at-largest-immigration-detention-center-in-the-u-s; Ted Hesson, *et. al.*, *Insight: Death rate in ICE immigrant detention centers more than doubles under Trump, Reuters analysis finds*, REUTERS (Jun. 17, 2026), https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/death-rate-ice-immigrant-detention-centers-more-than-doubles-under-trump-reuters-2026-06-17/; José Olivares, *Court records reveal gutting of DHS oversight: 'Incredibly dangerous'*, GUARDIAN (Mar. 8, 2026), https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/mar/08/dhs-oversight-court-record-review.
[10] Maria Cancian, *et. al.*, *The administration has detained 400,000 immigrants: What do we know about their children?*, BROOKINGS (May 18, 2026), https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-administration-has-detained-400000-immigrants-what-do-we-know-about-their-children/.
[11] *See, e.g.*, Daysi Calavia-Robertson, *Hunger Strike Erupts in ICE Facility as Detainees Grow Desperate Over Conditions*, NJ.COM (May 2026), https://www.nj.com/essex/2026/05/hunger-strike-erupts-in-ice-facility-as-detainees-grow-desperate-over-conditions-calavia-robertson.html; Gassama, *supra* note 9.
[12] Gassama, *supra* note 9.
[13] *See, e.g.,* Governor of New Jersey, *New Jersey Sues Delaney Hall Operator After It Refuses Full Access to Health Inspectors*, STATE OF N.J. (June 2, 2026), https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/2026/20260602.shtml.
[14] Ted Sherman, *ICE's Delaney Hall is a Mysterious 'Black Hole.' These Numbers Show What Happens Inside*, NJ.COM (June 11, 2026), https://www.nj.com/essex/2026/06/ices-delaney-hall-is-a-mysterious-black-hole-these-numbers-show-what-happens-inside.html.
[15] Hessen, *supra* note 9; Laura Sharman, *et. al.*, *ICE to stop reporting deaths of recently released detainees amid scrutiny*, CNN (Jun. 5, 2026), https://www.cnn.com/2026/06/05/us/ice-death-reports-recently-released-detainees-hnk.

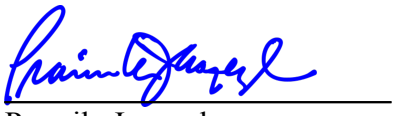
released.[16] Immigration detention is civil.[17] It is not meant to be punitive, and it certainly is not meant to be a death sentence. Yet despite the horrors we learn about every day, ICE is not raising detention standards. Instead, ICE is loosening standards and facilitating the abuses detained people are subjected to in immigration detention facilities.

In order to better understand the scope of consultation between DHS components and private contractors when revising detention standards, please produce the following information as soon as possible, but no later than September 18, 2026:

1. Copies of all communications between DHS officials and GEO Group officials regarding the revisions to detention standards that were published on ICE's website on June 15, 2026.
2. Copies of all communications between DHS officials and CoreCivic officials regarding the revisions to detention standards that were published on ICE's website on June 15, 2026.
3. Copies of all communications between DHS officials and any private contractor operating immigration detention facilities regarding revisions to detention centers made prior to 2026.

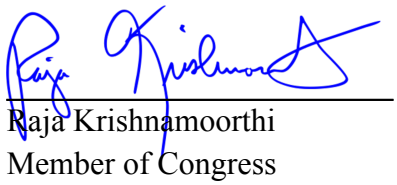
Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Pramila Jayapal
Ranking Member
Immigration Integrity,
Security, and Enforcement
House Judiciary Committee

[16] Casey Tolan, *et. al.*, *Exclusive: How understaffing and DHS policy drives rising deaths in ICE detention centers*, CNN (May 15, 2026), https://www.cnn.com/2026/05/15/us/ice-immigration-detention-centers-medical-care-deaths-invs-vis.
[17] *Detention Standards*, U.S. IMMGR. & CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (Jun. 15, 2026), https://www.ice.gov/detain/detention-management.



Raja Krishnamoorthi
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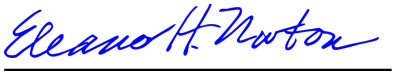

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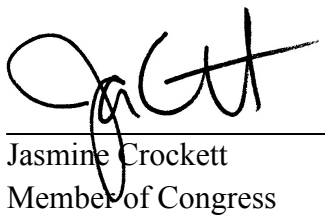

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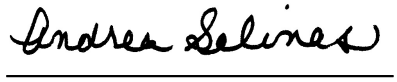

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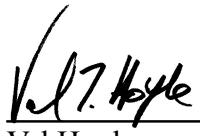

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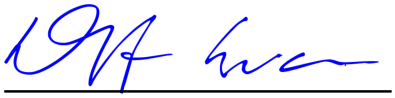

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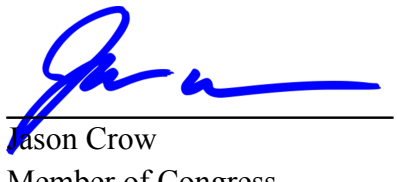
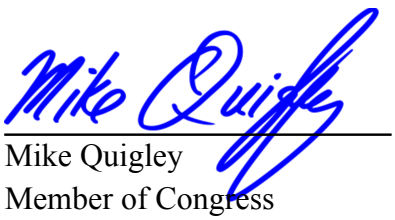


Jason Crow
Member of Congress



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