

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

April 25, 2024

Dear President Biden:

We write to express outrage over your administration's expansion of the cruel and unnecessary immigration detention system. Last month, you signed a spending bill that provides historically high funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention - \$3.4 billion in taxpayers' money. Our organizations work with and advocate on behalf of people who have experienced immigration detention. They carry life long scars from the mistreatment and dehumanization they endured because of the United States' reliance on detention, mostly through private prisons and county jails. Your administration is further entrenching this reliance, marking an utter betrayal of your campaign [promises](#).

On the date of your inauguration, fewer than 15,000 people were in ICE detention. This presented a [remarkable opportunity](#) to wind down a wasteful and abusive system. Indeed, your own [2023](#) and [2024](#) budget requests sought significantly decreased detention funding. ICE began internal reviews of the system, [recommending](#) the closure or downsizing of numerous facilities because of dangerously abusive conditions.

In an abrupt change of course, over the last two years, ICE has instead increased the number of people in custody. Most of the facilities on ICE's internal closure list remain open, despite numerous reports from advocates and service providers further documenting the ineffectiveness of detention and the need for a different approach. As the political winds shifted, so did your funding requests to Congress. In October 2023, you [requested supplemental detention funding](#), and your [FY2025 budget request](#) sought funding for 34,000 beds instead of the 25,000 sought in the two previous cycles. The result is unsurprising: the FY2024 spending bill you signed provides ICE \$3.4 billion to jail an average of 41,500 immigrants per day, historically high funding surpassing all four years of the Trump administration.

Detention should not be about politics. It is about human lives, and its use has devastating consequences for the people who endure it.

The system your administration is expanding is riddled with abuse and impunity. Your senior officials have been aware of these significant human rights concerns since day one. ICE's jails and prisons operate under insufficient standards with [inspections](#) that are notorious for covering up deficiencies. Inadequate medical care results in [deaths](#); LGBTQ individuals in custody suffer homophobic and [transphobic harassment](#) and [abuse](#); basic sanitation is often [lacking](#); Black

immigrants face unaffordable bonds and violence at [disparately high rates](#); and ICE's [use of solitary confinement](#) regularly meets the United Nations' definition of torture.

This suffering does not advance any rational policy goal. Detention does not provide an efficient or ethical means of border processing, and it certainly does not indicate to migrants that they are welcome in the United States. It merely exists to further the political goal of deterrence, which is cruel, inhumane and misguided – as even the most punitive forms of detention [have been proven](#) not to deter people from seeking safety or a better life.

We urge you to consider the legacy your administration intends to leave on immigration policy. Increasing the incarceration of immigrants is a grave mistake, and we urgently implore you to reverse course.

Sincerely,

National and international organizations:

18 Million Rising

Acacia Center for Justice

Afghans For A Better Tomorrow

African Communities Together

African Human Rights Coalition

Alianza Americas

American Friends Service Committee

America's Voice

Amnesty International USA

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

ASISTA Immigration Assistance

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)

Border Butterflies Project

Borderlands Resource Initiative

Bridges Faith Initiative

CASA

Center for Constitutional Rights

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Center for Immigration Law and Policy, UCLA School of Law
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Popular Democracy
Center for Victims of Torture
Church World Service
Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform (CCJR)
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Coalition on Human Needs
Colorado Jobs with Justice
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)
Community Justice Exchange
Defending Rights & Dissent
Detention Watch Network
Doctors for Camp Closure
Drug Policy Alliance
Esperanza United
Faith in Harm Reduction
Families For Freedom
Freedom for Immigrants
Haitian Bridge Alliance
HIAS
Hindus for Human Rights
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigrant Justice Network
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Immigrant Rights Clinic of Washington Square Legal Services
Immigration Equality
Immigration Hub
International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)

Justice in Motion
Justice Policy Institute
Latin America Working Group
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT)
Marjorie Kovler Center
Mijente
Muslim Advocates
National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, and Community Empowerment
(National PLACE)
National Employment Law Project
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)
National Partnership for New Americans
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
National Youth Justice Network
NCLR
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Physicians for Human Rights
Project ANAR
RAICES
Refugees International
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Showing Up for Racial Justice
Sikh Coalition
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
SPLC Action Fund

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Tahirih Justice Center
The Advocates for Human Rights
The Real News Network
Tsuru for Solidarity
UndocuBlack Network
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United We Dream Network
Unlock The Box
Vera Institute of Justice
Washington National Cathedral Sanctuary Ministry
We Are All America (WAAA)
Witness at the Border
Women Watch Afrika, Inc.
Women's Refugee Commission

Regional, state and local organizations:

ACLU of Florida
Adelante Mujeres
Advocates for Immigrant Rights
Al Otro Lado
Aldea - The People's Justice Center
American Friends Service Committee, Colorado
American Gateways
Americans for Immigrant Justice, Inc.
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta
Asian Law Alliance
Baker Interfaith Alliance
Baker Interfaith Friends
Bergen County Immigration Strategy Group
Boston Immigration Justice Accompaniment Network
California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice (CCIJ)

Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition
Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War
Centro De Trabajadores Unidos
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
Comité pro-inmigrantes
Conversations with Friends
Cross Border Network
Denver Justice and Peace Committee (DJPC)
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington DC
El Programa Hispano Catolico
El Refugio
Emmaus Community
Estrella del Paso (Formerly DMRS)
Faith in New Jersey
Faith in Texas
Family Voices NJ
First Friends of New Jersey & New York
Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Florida Restorative Justice Association (FRJA)
Food Justice DMV
Grassroots Leadership
Hartford Deportation Defense
Hispanic Affairs Project
Home is Here NOLA
Hope Border Institute
HOPE Community Center
Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative
Illinois Alliance for Reentry and Justice
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Illinois Community for Displaced Immigrants

Immigrant Defenders Law Center
Immigrant Justice Group, Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis
Immigrant Mutual Aid Coalition
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice
Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America (IFCLA)
Interfaith Alliance for Immigrant Justice
ISLA (Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy)
Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice
La Resistencia
Lamar Unidos
Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area
Long Island Immigration Clinic / Sisters of St. Joseph
Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants (LORI)
Make the Road New York
Mariposa Legal, Program of COMMON Foundation
Memphis Methodist Immigrant Relief
Midwest Immigration Bond Fund
Minnesota Freedom Fund
Minnesota Interfaith Coalition on Immigration
MIRA Coalition
Mobile Pathways
Modesto Peace/Life Center
Mountain View United Church
Muslim Justice League
NAMI Huntington
Never Again Action
New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice
New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
New York Immigration Coalition
NorCal Resist

Northern New Jersey Sanctuary Coalition
Northern NJ Sanctuary Coalition
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
Oasis Legal Services
Occupy Bergen County
Pax Christi New Jersey
Pennsylvania Immigrant and Citizenship Coalition
Prisoners' Legal Services of Massachusetts
Program for Torture Victims
Project South
Public Counsel
Rebuilding Independence My Style
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network
Rural Organizing Project
San Francisco Living Wage Coalition
Society of the flora, fauna & friend
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network
SURJ NYC
Texas Civil Rights Project
The Mami Chelo Foundation, INC
The Porchlight Collective SAP
Transformations CDC
UnLocal
UU Mass Action
Washington Defender Association
West Hills Friends Peace Committee
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center

*Cc: Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security
Honorable Merrick Garland, Attorney General
Patrick Lechleitner, Acting Director, Immigration and Customs Enforcement*