



January 18, 2021

President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr.
Biden-Harris Transition
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President-Elect Biden,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to you in solidarity to respectfully demand that your administration **take swift executive action within your first 100 days** as President of the United States to end three (3) of most egregious immigration policies still in practice in our great nation. These policies are antithetical to what the United States stands for and are causing ongoing harm to not only the immigrants and families directly affected, but to all Americans.

First, we ask that you **put an immediate end to all family incarceration in the United States by closing the three remaining family detention facilities** still being operated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), with a combined capacity of 3,326 people.[1] These facilities are the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas, a privately owned center operated by the for-profit company CoreCivic[2] that can hold 2,400 people; Berks County Residential Center in Leesport, Pennsylvania, a county-operated 96-bed facility[3] with space for 200 people; and Karnes County Residential Center (KCRC) in Karnes City, Texas, a privately owned facility operated by the for-profit GEO Group,[4] which can hold 830 people.

The current family detention program is the largest since the internment of Japanese Americans in the 1940s.[5] Not only is the detention of families inhumane, it is also known to cause numerous adverse psychological and physical consequences to those who experience it, most notably children. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) considers the detention of immigrant children to be a specific type of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE), consequences of which include but are not limited to, increased risk of injury and sexually transmitted infections, teen pregnancy, maternal and child health problems, involvement in sex trafficking, as well as a wide range of chronic diseases and leading causes of death such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and suicide.[6] The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) notes that “women and girls are highly vulnerable to sexual assault in immigration detention facilities.”[7] In 2019, Pennsylvania's Auditor General opened an investigation into reports of sexual abuse, inadequate health care, and other human rights abuses in the Berks County facility,[8] underscoring the urgent need to close these centers and release the families being held in them.

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Second, we ask that you **create a comprehensive plan for the expeditious release from immigration detention of all people with underlying health conditions** which would put them at risk of serious complications or death from continued incarceration. Detention facilities, whether they be standalone immigrant detention facilities or a part of county jails, are often crowded and unsanitary and fail to adhere to recognized standards for prevention, screening, and containment of transmittable diseases. ICE's practice of frequently transferring people in detention from one location to another increases the risk of outbreak. For these reasons, transmission of respiratory diseases in jails and prisons is incredibly common. It is estimated that up to a quarter of the US prison population has been infected with tuberculosis,[9] with a rate of active TB infection that is 6-10 times higher than the general population.[10] Past outbreaks of mumps, influenza, and varicella have spread throughout immigration detention facilities. For example, 5 cases of mumps in September 2018 ballooned to nearly 900 cases among staff and people in detention by August 2019 in 57 facilities across 19 states.[11]

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, countless detained people, as well as ICE agents and prison guards who work within detention facilities, have contracted the disease.[12] A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) concluded that, based on case numbers and positivity rates, COVID-19 is escalating more rapidly inside immigration detention centers compared with the general US population.[13] This not only affects the state of this health crisis inside detention facilities, but also affects the surrounding communities of which these facilities are a part. Detained people who are at increased risk for severe illness and death from COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions place an increased burden on already strained local healthcare facilities and hospitals. For this reason, it is imperative that all medically vulnerable people being detained by ICE be immediately released while awaiting asylum claims or deportation determinations.

Third, we ask that you **order an immediate end to ICE raids in American communities**. We know that the constant intake of new immigrants from the larger community places detention centers at ongoing risk of COVID-19 outbreaks and increased transmission across facilities. But in addition to the effects on infectious disease spread, ongoing ICE raids in American neighborhoods and workplaces lead to adverse security, psychological and economic consequences to the people living in those communities.

It is known that community members are less likely to cooperate with local law enforcement if they fear that ICE will be notified of undocumented people in that community. In 2008, testimony given during a Congressional hearing of the Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Workforce Protections detailed how an ICE raid conducted at a meat processing plant while the Department of Labor and Iowa State officials were investigating the owner of the plant for child labor violations jeopardized the ongoing investigation and threatened to derail it completely.[14] In addition to making criminal investigations harder, ICE raids have widespread psychological impacts on members of the community, most notably children. Children of undocumented immigrants, $\frac{2}{3}$ of whom are American citizens, who witness a parent being arrested by ICE have been found to suffer long-term psychological

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consequences such as depression, anxiety and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can affect them for the rest of their lives.[14,15] Following a 2018 ICE raid in Mt. Pleasant Iowa, a local high school soccer coach recalled, “The boys cry, and they start to beat the wall, and they asked me, ‘Tell me coach why is this happening to me? Tell me why?’” He went on to share that many of those students subsequently dropped out of school to find jobs in order to continue to support their families and younger siblings in the absence of their parents.[16] This leads to the final point which is that ICE raids also adversely affect the economies of the communities in which they take place. An American Immigration Council report found that a 2006 workplace raid in Marshalltown Iowa “contributed to a localized economic recession for perhaps six months to a year after the raid.”[17] The domino effect of a raid leads to not only hardships for the workplace in which it took place, but to a decreased local consumer base, decreased local retail sales, and increased in foreclosures on homes.[16]

The policies and practices of the former Trump administration led our great nation down a dark path of exclusion, mass incarceration, and blatant human rights violations of immigrant men, women and children. We are imploring you to take action to correct our course and work towards returning the United States to its former ideal of being a welcoming place for the world’s most vulnerable - a place where people and families can find a better life for themselves without living in fear and sickness. We urge you to use your executive power to restore these American ideals and end the ongoing suffering of so many people within our borders.

Sincerely,

1. Doctors for Camp Closure
2. Clinicians for Progressive Care
3. Southern Border Communities Coalition
4. Lawyers for Civil Rights
5. University of San Francisco Immigration & Deportation Defense Clinic
6. Tsuru For Solidarity
7. Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR-USA)
8. Physicians for Social Responsibility/Sacramento
9. Manzanar Committee (Los Angeles, CA)
10. Alianza Sacramento
11. Maryland Legislative Coalition
12. PG Change Makers Coalition
13. First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco
14. Manzanar Committee

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15. Campaign for Immigrant Detention Reform (CIDR)
16. The Chicago People's Rights Collaborative
17. ACLU of Maryland
18. SFLCLAA
19. St. Mark's Lutheran Church (Sanctuary Team)
20. Bay Area Border Relief
21. Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
22. Medical Students for Choice
23. Florin Japanese American Citizens League - Sacramento Valley
24. San Francisco CODEPINK
25. Neponset Health Center Dorchester MA
26. Japanese American Citizens League
27. OWL SF
28. Immigrant Service Providers Group/Health
29. DC Volunteer Lawyers Project
30. Church World Service
31. UCSF Pediatrics Immigrant Health Task Force
32. The Institute for Physician Wellness
33. Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
34. Multicultural Efforts to end Sexual Assault (MESA)
35. Yale School of Medicine
36. Physicians for Human Rights
37. AsylumWorks
38. Church World Service
39. St. Mark's Lutheran Church, San Francisco - Sanctuary Team
40. Sisterhood of Salam Shalom Silver Spring
41. Takoma Park Mobilization
42. Dignity in Asylum
43. National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians
44. United We Dream
45. ACLU MONTGOMERY County, MD Immigrants' Rights Subcommittee
46. Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition
47. MGB Hospital
48. CASA

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49. Japanese American Citizens League Philadelphia Chapter
50. Tikkun Olam Chavurah
51. Immigration Justice Task Force - First Parish UU Concord Mass
52. Sanctuary DMV
53. Congregation Action Network
54. Nikkei Student Union of UC Berkeley
55. The Medical Providers Network (MPN) at the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
56. Doctors for America, Immigrant Health Justice Working Group
57. Lifeundocumented.org
58. Never Again Action - Los Angeles
59. New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI)
60. Migrant, Immigrant & Refugee Rights Alliance
61. Community for Children, Inc.
62. Innovation Law Lab
63. Bend the Arc: Jewish Action - Prince George's County, MD
64. Families Belong Together
65. Indivisible Central Maryland
66. Grady
67. Migrant Clinicians Network
68. Detention Watch Network
69. Maryland Against ICE Detention

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