

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew T. Albence  
Deputy Director  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
500 12<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Deputy Director Albence:

In response to the humanitarian and public health challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, I urge you to exercise your authority to ensure that your agencies take critical steps to mitigate the risk of infection, illness, and death for families and individuals in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, as well as facility staff. One critical step your agencies can immediately implement is to release the immigrants and asylum-seekers held in ICE federal detention facilities and county and local jails.

Detained individuals will face grave risks if exposed to infection in immigration detention facilities, because of rapid spread within crowded centers. Conditions in immigration detention are well-documented to have substandard medical care, inadequate basic hygiene, and overcrowding. Your agencies are responsible for the health and safety of the immigrants and asylum-seekers detained in ICE facilities and must take all appropriate steps to protect these individuals from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The release of immigrants in civil, administrative detention is warranted in the public interest to ensure that health care professionals - and area hospitals - have the capacity to manage COVID-19 cases that may arise. Public health experts have already recommended reducing prison and detention populations.

Many immigrants currently detained are longtime residents of the U.S. who were taken from established lives in this country, and many others, including asylum-seekers, have close family, faith and other community ties who would help house them.

I urge your field offices to proactively work with local legal, humanitarian, faith-based, health and community organizations -- as well as state and local public health officials -- to swiftly and safely reduce the populations of immigration detention facilities and mitigate the inevitable spread of COVID-19 to those held in these facilities.

Sincerely,

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_