

January 28, 2026

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

Mr. Todd M. Lyons  
Acting Director  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
500 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Mail Stop 5902  
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Director Lyons:

We write to express our grave concern and demand transparency regarding the alarming increase in deaths of individuals held in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody. As the Trump administration reaches the one-year mark, the number of deaths in ICE detention has reached historic levels. 2025 was reported to be “ICE’s deadliest year” in more than two decades, with 31 deaths in custody reported.<sup>1</sup> And less than one month into 2026, six additional deaths in ICE custody have already been reported.

Individuals in ICE custody are dependent on the care and safety that the federal government provides. All immigration detention facilities, regardless of whether they are operated by private companies or the federal government, are legally required to meet constitutional and statutory standards, including the provision of adequate medical care and safe living conditions.<sup>2</sup> ICE’s own detention standards further require the provision of necessary medical care, including initial medical, dental, and mental health screenings; routine and preventive care; specialty and emergency care; hospitalization when medically indicated; and timely responses to medical complaints.<sup>3</sup> Yet reports describe widespread and systemic failures in the provision of medical and mental health care in ICE detention facilities, including ICE detention medical staff delaying treatment, failing to manage necessary medication, and failing to provide appropriate mental health care, leading to increased risk of deaths by suicide.<sup>4</sup> In fact, three of the six deaths in ICE custody this month were reportedly suicides. ICE has also reportedly failed to pay any third-party providers for medical care for individuals in immigration detention since October of 2025.<sup>5</sup> As a result, some providers are denying services for detained individuals, exacerbating the existing crisis of care plaguing immigration detention centers.<sup>6</sup>

These concerns are made worse by the lack of transparency and the conflicting accounts of deaths in custody. The death of Geraldo Lunas Campos on January 3 exemplifies this. When the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) initially announced his death, the agency did not

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<sup>1</sup> Documents on File with Committee.

<sup>2</sup> *Explainer: U.S. Immigration Detention and Custody Standards*, NATN’L IMMIGR. FORUM (Jun. 18, 2025), <https://forumtogether.org/article/explainer-u-s-immigration-detention-and-custody-standards/>.

<sup>3</sup> Abigail F. Kolker, Medical Care Standards in Immigrant Detention Facilities, CRS Report IF12623 (Cong. Research Serv. Apr. 2, 2024), <https://www.crs.gov/Reports/IF12623>?

<sup>4</sup> <https://americanoversight.org/resource/deadly-failures-preventable-deaths-in-u-s-immigration-detention/>;

<sup>5</sup> Judd Legum, *ICE has stopped paying for detainee medical treatment*, POPULAR INFORMATION (Jan. 20, 2026), <https://popular.info/p/ice-has-stopped-paying-for-detainee>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

disclose a cause of death.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin stated that Mr. Lunas Campos died after attempting to take his own life.<sup>8</sup> According to public reporting however, a fellow detained person stated that he witnessed Mr. Lunas Campos being choked by guards.<sup>9</sup> Further, the El Paso County Medical Examiner's Office has ruled that Mr. Lunas Campos's death was a homicide.<sup>10</sup> These conflicting accounts raise profound concerns about the circumstances of his death and DHS's handling of the case.

Further, the alleged suicide of Chaofeng Ge is equally concerning. According to DHS, Mr. Ge was found hanging in his cell four days after entering ICE custody on August 4, 2025.<sup>11</sup> However, according to an autopsy viewed by Mr. Ge's attorney and media outlets, Mr. Ge's hands and feet were found bound together, calling into serious question the cause of death provided by DHS.<sup>12</sup>

This rise in deaths in custody points to systemic failures in the immigration detention system that require immediate attention. The alarming increase in deaths is coming at a time when ICE is detaining over 70,000 people every day, the Trump administration has dismantled the agencies responsible for oversight, and DHS is unlawfully restricting Members of Congress from accessing detention facilities to conduct oversight.

Being placed in immigration detention should never amount to a death sentence. The families of those in detention centers, along with the rest of the American people, deserve transparency and accountability now. To better understand why deaths in ICE custody are increasing and why known risks are not being effectively mitigated, we request responses to the following questions as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 22, 2026:

- What measures have ICE and DHS taken to ensure they can provide adequate medical and mental health staff who are trained to administer appropriate medical care when needed?
- How many detention facilities lack full-time medical staffing? Provide a breakdown by facility, including vacant positions.
- Who has the authority to approve hospitalizations, medical transfers, or alternatives for those who are medically vulnerable?

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<sup>7</sup> Douglas MacMillan, *Medical examiner likely to classify death of ICE detainee as homicide, recorded call says*, WASH. POST (Jan. 15, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2026/01/15/ice-detention-death-homicide/?>.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Pooja Salhotra, *Death of Cuban Detainee in El Paso ICE Facility Is Ruled a Homicide*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Jan. 21, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/21/us/el-paso-ice-detainee-homicide.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Dan Gooding, *Man Detained by ICE Found Dead, Hanging With Hands and Feet Tied—Attorney*, NEWSWEEK (Nov. 18, 2025), <https://www.newsweek.com/ice-detainee-death-family-questions-hands-feet-tied-11066992>

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

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- Does every detention facility detaining more than 25 people have a full-time, in-person staffer designated with this responsibility? If not, how many facilities lack this position and what is your plan to ensure adequate staffing?
- How are decisions to not escalate care taken, documented, and reviewed?
- How does ICE plan to ensure a legally obligated and standardized level of care across spaces of detention, including federal and private detention facilities, and hospitals caring for migrants in custody?
- Is ICE working to expand and revise its current standards and policies to reflect the influx of migrants and the influx of money given to the agency?
- What role does the DHS Office of Inspector General play in reviewing deaths in ICE custody, and how are findings used to prevent future fatalities?
- What steps are DHS and ICE taking to prevent further suicides in ICE custody?
- What efforts is ICE planning to take to properly notify the families of those in detention when their loved ones experience medical emergencies and transfers?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



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



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari  
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas  
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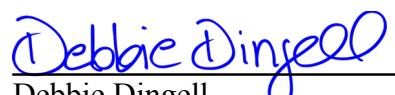
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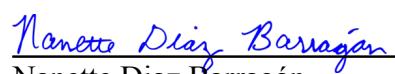
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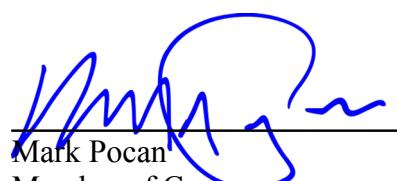
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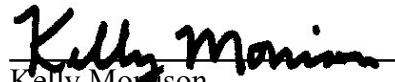
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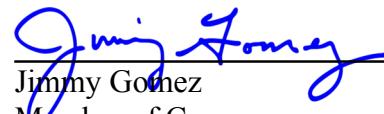
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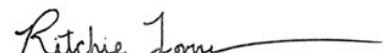
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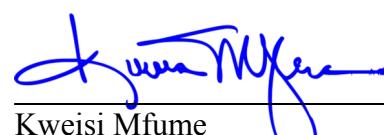
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