



July 16, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528-0525

The Honorable Joseph V. Cuffari
Inspector General
Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528-0305

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
U.S. Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G St., NW
Washington, DC 20548

Ms. Lisa Bowen
Warden
Richwood Correctional Center
180 Pine Bayou Circle
Monroe, LA 71202

Dear Secretary Noem, Inspector General Cuffari, Comptroller General Dodaro, and Mr. Deville:

As members of the Democratic Women's Caucus, we write with grave and urgent concern about the treatment of women in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody. Too many disturbing stories have emerged from women's interactions with ICE agents over the last few months—even elected officials have encountered aggressive, unprovoked, and unacceptable treatment.¹ In addition to this aggression, we are deeply concerned about women's access to health care, especially maternal health care, in ICE detention.² The reported assaults, medical neglect, and overall mistreatment of women by ICE agents and contractors demands immediate and thorough oversight and accountability, and this abuse must stop immediately. **We request an immediate and in-depth investigation into the violations against women while in ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody.**

These accounts of abuse are horrifying but not new. In September 2020, during Trump's first term, a complaint was filed at the Irwin County Detention Center (ICDC) regarding the unethical treatment of detainees at ICDC – medical neglect and a concerning high rate of women undergoing gynecological procedures without proper informed consent.³ It was also reported that ICDC staff downplayed the health

1 Catalini, M. (2025, June 25). *New Jersey Democratic Rep. McIver released on recognizance on federal assault charges*. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/lamonica-mciver-ice-assault-charge-new-jersey-2e6403ecb933882e641557303cdc6b2a>

2 Crescencio, A. (2025, May 27). *ICE arrested a pregnant Tennessee woman — while in detention in Louisiana, she had a stillbirth*. Nashville Banner. <https://nashvillebanner.com/2025/05/27/iris-monterroso-pregnancy-loss/>

3 Project South & Government Accountability Project. (2020, September). *Complaint to the DHS Office of Inspector General regarding medical neglect and non-consensual procedures at Irwin County Detention Center*.

concerns from detainees. These reports were confirmed in an investigation in 2022.⁴ It is beyond our comprehension that women were unknowingly sterilized without their consent while in government custody. Although the facility was shut down, this was not an isolated case; rather, this is a consistent pattern perpetrated by this administration.

We also know that this is an intentional action by the administration and not an unintended consequence to mass detention. In May, CBP quietly repealed protections for pregnant and postpartum women in custody, removing requirements for appropriate medical care, lactation accommodations, and basic supplies like diapers and baby formula.⁵ ⁶ Your disregard for women's health and safety is not just a one time instance, the abuse and neglect are part of a larger, systemic failure to treat women with dignity, compassion, and basic medical care.

In May 2025, Iris Dayana Monterroso-Lemus, a pregnant woman, was arrested in Lenoir City, Tennessee and taken into ICE custody.⁷ Throughout her detainment, Monterroso-Lemus repeatedly requested medical care but was denied. Monterroso-Lemus reported experiencing pain and no fetal movement for three days, yet she was ignored. She told reporters on a phone call, "They didn't give me medical attention — nowhere. Not in Louisiana, not in Alabama. I was in Alabama too, sleeping on the floor."⁸ After multiple transfers and too many pleas, she was finally admitted to a hospital on April 29th, where she delivered a stillborn baby. The doctors noted that her loss was a result of not receiving prenatal care — the care she asked for repeatedly.

In the same facility that Monterroso-Lemus was overlooked and neglected during her pregnancy pains, multiple reports surfaced that highlighted Richwood's horrific conditions. In 2020, the National Immigrant Justice Center alongside several other organizations released a report that found numerous reports of delayed care and medical neglect at the Richwood Correctional Center.⁹ For example, the medical staff interviewed admitted that treatment for a broken arm could take a week. In 2023, the Office of Inspector General conducted an investigation and found that the detention center violated and compromised the health, safety, and rights of detainees.¹⁰ Richwood Correctional Center was found not to

<https://projectsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/OIG-ICDC-Complaint-1.pdf>

4 U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs. (n.d.). *[Medical Mistreatment Of Women In Ice Detention]*. <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/CHRG-117shrg50238.pdf>

5 U.S. Customs and Border Protection. (2025, May 7). *Distribution memo* [Rescission of Legacy Policies Related to Care and Custody]. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. [https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/intc-45073 - acl signed distribution memo 5.5.25.pdf](https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/intc-45073_-_acl_signed_distribution_memo_5.5.25.pdf)

6 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2024, August 2). *Pregnant, postpartum, and lactating individuals in immigration detention: Fiscal year 2024, semiannual report 1* [Report to Congress]. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/0802_2024_ice_pregnant_postpartum_and_lactating_individuals_in_immigration_detention_semiannual_1.pdf

7 Crescencio, A. (2025, May 27). *ICE arrested a pregnant Tennessee woman — while in detention in Louisiana, she had a stillbirth*. Nashville Banner. <https://nashvillebanner.com/2025/05/27/iris-monterroso-pregnancy-loss/>

8 Crescencio, A. (2025, May 27). *ICE arrested a pregnant Tennessee woman — while in detention in Louisiana, she had a stillbirth*. Nashville Banner. <https://nashvillebanner.com/2025/05/27/iris-monterroso-pregnancy-loss/>

9 National Immigrant Justice Center. (2020, April). *Justice-free zones: U.S. immigration detention under the Trump administration*. [https://immigrantjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Justice-Free-Zones Immigrant Detention Report ACLU-HRW-NIJC April-2020.pdf](https://immigrantjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Justice-Free-Zones_Immigrant_Detention_Report_ACLU-HRW-NIJC_April-2020.pdf)

10 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. (2023, February 28). *Violations of ICE detention standards at Richwood Correctional Center in Monroe, Louisiana* (Report No. OIG-23-18). <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2023-03/OIG-23-18-Mar23.pdf>

have a reliable system for detainees to file grievances and denied detainees the right to file medical grievances. How can women like Iris Dayana Monterroso-Lemus seek justice and reconciliation if the facility refuses to permit a system of accountability?

In addition to the treatment of women in detention, we are deeply worried about the aggression ICE agents have shown when arresting people, particularly women. Earlier this month Cary López Alvarado, a nine-months pregnant U.S. citizen was detained by agents in Harthorne while trying to protect her undocumented husband and co-worker on private property.¹¹ Agents accused her of obstructing an arrest, despite her repeatedly stating she was pregnant and unable to resist. During the confrontation, she was shoved by an officer, falling to the ground. Following her release from ICE detention, López Alvarado was hospitalized for sharp pains and monitored due to concerns of her and her baby's well being, as her due date was only a week away. She was told agents would contact her regarding the obstruction allegations but received no documentation or citation related to the incident.

Over and over again, women are being mistreated by ICE, CBP, and contractors from detainment to detention. These horrifying stories are the result of systemic neglect, cruelty, and policy failures that we must confront head-on. We demand answers, accountability, and action. Your administration cannot claim to 'protect women' when your agents are on video ripping babies out of women's arms and pushing them to the ground aggressively.¹² We request a response to the following questions within 60 days of receipt:

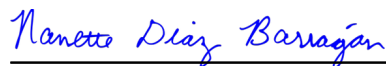
- 1) What concrete and immediate steps will this administration take to protect the rights, health, and lives of women in detention?
- 2) How will you ensure transparency, accountability, and oversight across bodies responsible for their care?
- 3) How will you uphold women and their babies' basic human dignity and ensure their health needs are met without delay or discrimination?
- 4) We demand a full, transparent investigation into the pregnancy loss of Iris Dayana Monterroso-Lemus's and the broader mistreatment of pregnant and postpartum women in ICE and CBP custody. We request a report that outlines the incident, accountability, and corrective actions.

The Democratic Women's Caucus will not stay silent while women, many of them mothers, many of them fleeing violence and hardship, are mistreated and neglected in government custody. Again, we request a prompt and thorough investigation into the treatment of women within ICE and CBP custody.

Sincerely,

11 Acevedo, Nicole. (2025, June 11). *A pregnant U.S. citizen went to the hospital after immigration agents detained her*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/pregnant-us-citizen-went-hospital-immigration-agents-detained-rcna212033>

12 Rahman, Billal. (2025, May). *ICE agents battle mom clinging to baby in 'chaotic' video*. Newsweek. <https://www.newsweek.com/ice-agents-battle-mom-baby-chaotic-video-worcester-2070027>



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



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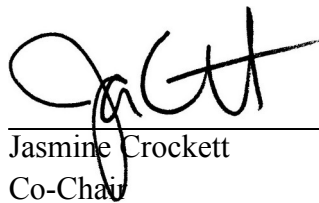
Deborah K. Ross
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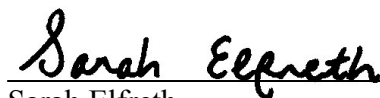
Norma J. Torres
New Democrat Coalition
Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



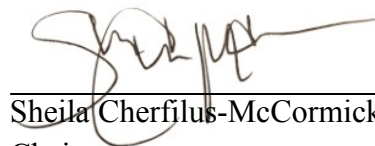
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



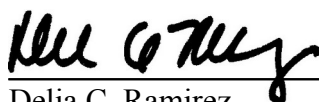
Jasmine Crockett
Co-Chair
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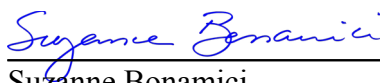
Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
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Democratic Women's Caucus



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



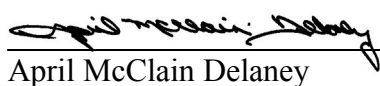
Suzanne Bonamici
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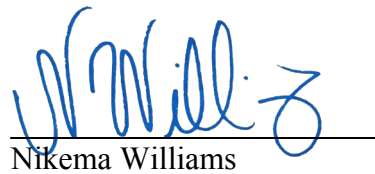
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
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April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Chief Whip
Democratic Women's Caucus



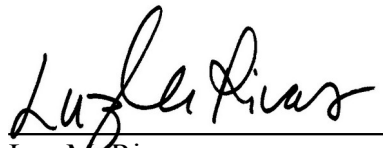
Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Diana DeGette
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Luz M. Rivas
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Laura Friedman
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Andrea Salinas
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Caucus Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



Maxine Dexter
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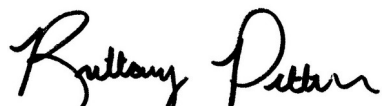
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Democratic Women's Caucus



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Julia Brownley
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Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



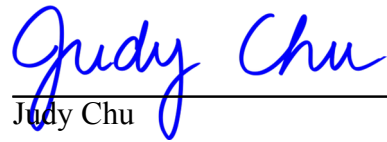
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Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
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Kelly Morrison
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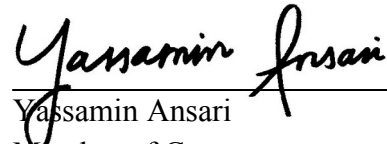
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Reproductive Health Care
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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



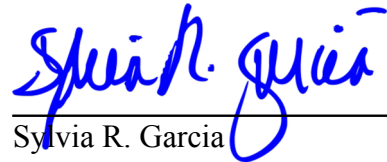
Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



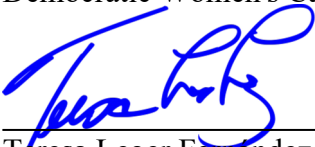
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American Caucus Liaison
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Communications Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



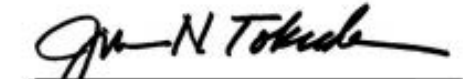
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Teresa Leger Fernandez
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Chellie Pingree
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Jill Tokuda
Progressive Caucus Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus

CC:

Mr. Thomas Homan

Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations