



June 1, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mullin:

As members of the Democratic Women's Caucus, we write to share our continued concern that the Trump administration's immigration policies put women facing intimate partner violence at greater risk and prevent them from seeking lifesaving help. We sent your Department a letter earlier this year urging the compliance with statutory protections for immigrant survivors and received no response.¹ Instead, the circumstances for immigrant survivors have worsened—a mother of two was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents after testifying against her ex-boyfriend for choking her until she lost consciousness then raping her.² Your Department's immigration policies have created a chilling effect that prevents many immigrant women from seeking help or accessing critical community resources. You have threatened the dignity and safety of immigrant women being abused for indiscriminate and inhumane immigration enforcement. **Once again, we urge your Department to immediately act to protect immigrant survivors by reinstating protections to help survivors escape abuse, stay safe and seek justice—without fear of deportation.**

Across the country, the justice system is failing immigrant survivors. Over the last year, several women have been detained by ICE rather than being offered help and having the opportunity to seek justice for the abuse they experienced. In Austin, Texas, a mother and her child were detained by ICE agents after reporting a domestic disturbance incident. In Houston, Texas, police reported a woman to ICE after she called 9-1-1 to report domestic abuse. In Sacramento, California, a woman reported her immigration case specialist to a different case specialist for sexual harassment, and she was detained by ICE.³ These women called for help and were met

1 Democratic Women's Caucus. (2026, January 15). *Democratic Women's Caucus demands DHS reinstate protections for immigrant survivors*. <https://democraticwomenscaucus.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=686>

2 Sheinerman, M.-R. (2026, April). *She testified about being raped. Then ICE showed up*. The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/2026/04/ice-deportation-domestic-violence-victims/686629/>

with more threats to their safety and wellbeing. Not only does this harm survivors, but the lack of accountability for the abuser further threatens the safety of our communities.

Immigrant women are especially vulnerable to intimate partner violence—experiencing intimate partner violence at a rate of 49%, which is three times the national average.⁴ This is in part because abusers can use survivors’ immigration status, to wield control, manipulating survivors not to report the abuse. In 2025, 75.6% of advocates reported that the immigrant survivors they help have concerns about contacting the police; 70.3% reported that immigrant survivors are concerned about going to court for a matter related to their abuser; and 50% reported that immigrant survivors chose not to report their abuser out of fear.⁵ The lack of reporting also means that abusers remain in our communities- making all of us less safe.

The largest barrier preventing immigrant women from reporting abuse is the threat of deportation. As we previously brought to your attention, your Department is not following the law. The *Trafficking Victims Protection Act* established T and U visas to protect immigrants. However, we continue to receive reports that ICE agents are taking enforcement actions against immigrant survivors, which could lead to their deportation.⁶ Survivors are stripped of their ability to report abuse, hold the abuser accountable or seek help from domestic violence shelters and other services. This leaves survivors no options but to stay with their abuser, and the abuser remains a threat to the entire community.

Moreover, in December 2025, USCIS published updates to its Policy Manual that significantly weakened longstanding protections for immigrant survivors of domestic violence under the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)*.⁷ The new narrow the definitions of “battery and extreme cruelty,” raise evidentiary burdens through a stricter interpretation of the “any credible evidence” standard, and impose new good moral character guidelines that ignore the realities survivors face—including trauma's effect on memory, abusers’ control over documents, and language and

3 Sheinerman, M.-R. (2026, April). *She testified about being raped. Then ICE showed up*. The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/2026/04/ice-deportation-domestic-violence-victims/686629/>

4 National Organization for Women. (2017). *Intimate partner violence and immigrant women*. <https://now.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Learn-More-IPV-and-Immigrant-Womenpdf.pdf>

5 Alliance for Immigrant Survivors, *Fear and Silence: 2025 Insights from Advocates for Immigrant Survivors*, 2025, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b9f1d48da02bc44473c36f1/t/6851e1903a67be6191523f91/1750196624790/AIS_Insights-from-Advocates-for-Immigrant+Survivors.pdf

6 Public Counsel. (2025, October 14). *Legal challenge seeks to end harmful ICE policy targeting immigrant survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and other serious crimes*. <https://publiccounsel.org/press-releases/legal-challenge-seeks-to-end-harmful-ice-policy-targeting-immigrant-survivors-of-domestic-violence-human-trafficking-and-other-serious-crimes/>

7 Jackie Llanos. (2026 January 21). *The Seemingly Small Changes That Could Shut Out Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence*. <https://www.notus.org/immigration/violence-against-women-act-uscis-fraud-changes>

cultural barriers.⁸ These changes reward abusers by making it harder for survivors to self-petition for relief which goes against the intent of VAWA.

Without protections in place for survivors to report violence coupled with stories about enforcement actions at courthouses and other sensitive locations, immigrant survivors are left with no safe avenues to report their abuse. DHS rescinded a previous policy that protected specific locations from immigration enforcement including schools, churches, and hospitals.⁹ This enforcement tactic adds another layer of isolation to women experiencing intimate partner violence as they cannot safely seek community resources, shelters, or health care without fear of deportation.

Your Department must re-evaluate their policies to ensure that immigrant women survivors of intimate partner violence and other crimes can seek safety without fear. Your Department is punishing victims rather than perpetrators, which contradicts your Department and the President's stated priority to keep our communities safe and get violent offenders off our streets. Your policies are instead protecting violent offenders, leaving many women vulnerable, scared, with their safety at real risk. Effective enforcement depends on survivors being able to safely report crime. Congress created survivor-based protections to support law enforcement and improve public safety. A victim-centered approach strengthens enforcement, increases accountability, and makes us all safer.

The Democratic Women's Caucus stands with all survivors, and we implore your Department to undo these dangerous immigration policies and restore protections that allow survivors to escape abuse and receive the resources they need to heal. They deserve to find support without the looming threat of deportation.

As you assume your new position, we would like to request a meeting with you to discuss this issue further. We look forward to your timely response.


Sincerely,

⁸ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2025, December 22). *USCIS restores integrity to the VAWA domestic abuse program after finding rampant fraud*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

<https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/uscis-restores-integrity-to-the-vawa-domestic-abuse-program-after-finding-rampant-fraud>

⁹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2025, January 21). *Statement from a DHS spokesperson on directives expanding law enforcement and ending the abuse of humanitarian parole*.

<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/01/21/statement-dhs-spokesperson-directives-expanding-law-enforcement-and-ending-abuse>



Debbie Dingell
Senate Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus




Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



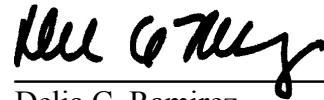
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Co-Chair
Communications Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Teresa Leger Fernández
Chair
Democratic Women's Caucus



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Co-Chair
Caregiving Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Julie Johnson
Equality Caucus Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



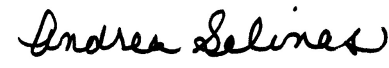
Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Co-Chair
Policy Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Deborah K. Ross
Co-Chair
Policy Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Andrea Salinas
Congressional Hispanic
Caucus Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



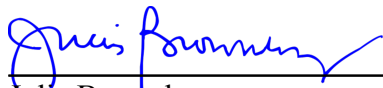
Joyce Beatty
National Leaders &
Advocacy Organizations
Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



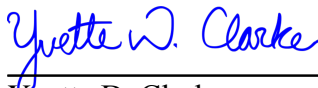
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Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Adelita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



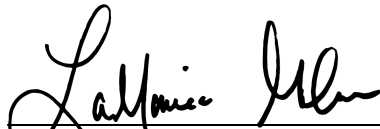
Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



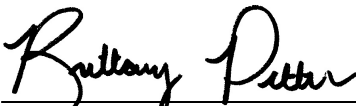
Sarah McBride
Whip
Democratic Women's Caucus



Lois Frankel
Chair Emerita
Democratic Women's Caucus



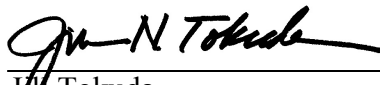
LaMonica McIver
New Member Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



Brittany Petersen
Co-Chair
Caregiving Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Pramila Jayapal
Congressional Asian Pacific
American Caucus Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



JM Tokuda
Progressive Caucus Liaison
Democratic Women's Caucus



Nikema Williams
Chief Whip
Democratic Women's Caucus



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Co-Chair & Liaison
Reproductive Healthcare
Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Kelly Morrison
Co-Chair & Liaison
Reproductive Healthcare
Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



Luz M. Rivas
Member of Congress

cc:

Joseph B. Edlow
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
5900 Capital Gateway Drive
Camp Springs, MD 20588