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CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS
119th Congress

April 10, 2026

Todd M. Lyons
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Dear Acting Director Lyons:

I write to express deep alarm and unequivocal opposition to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) continued detention of children and families in immigration facilities across the United States. Recent reporting indicates that more than 6,200 children were detained in immigration centers over the past year alone.¹ At the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas (commonly known as “Dilley”), nearly 400 individuals are currently being held, including 49 families. Among them are at least 77 children and 244 women, some detained for over a year, in direct violation of the *Flores settlement's* 20-day limit.^{2,3}

These numbers are not abstract. They represent children growing up behind barbed wire, families subjected to prolonged confinement, and a system that fails to meet even basic standards of care and dignity. Families report limited access to clean drinking water, children becoming ill from food that is contaminated with worms and mold, and a recent measles outbreak that exposed children to a life-threatening virus at a time when their health was already compromised by chronic stress and poor nutrition.^{4,5,6} Accounts from Members of Congress who recently visited the Dilley facility describe a deeply troubling reality: inadequate medical care, mistreatment, and reports of racist verbal abuse by staff.

These are not isolated concerns but come as a direct result of policies that have deliberately funneled billions of dollars to keep families in detention centers that should have long been closed. Detaining children and families is not only unnecessary, but it is also harmful. Extensive evidence shows that even short periods of detention can inflict lasting psychological and developmental damage on children.⁷

¹Flagg, Anna, and Shannon Heffernan. “ICE Has Detained 6,200+ Kids in Trump’s Second Term, Up 10x Since Biden Left Office.” *The Marshall Project*, 6 Apr. 2026, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2026/04/06/ice-kids-detention-over-6200-trump>

²“Más de 6,200 niños fueron detenidos en centros migratorios durante el último año.” *El Diario NY*, 8 Apr. 2026, <https://eldiariony.com/2026/04/08/mas-de-6200-ninos-fueron-detenidos-en-centros-migratorios-durante-el-ultimo-ano/>

³History and Update on Flores Settlement.” *Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)*, <https://www.cwla.org/history-and-update-on-flores-settlement/>

⁴Kriel, Lomi, and Alex Nguyen. “Two Cases of Measles Detected at Dilley Immigrant Family Detention Center.” *The Texas Tribune*, 2 Feb. 2026, www.texastribune.org/2026/02/02/measles-dilley-immigrant-detention-facility-liam-ramos-texas/.

⁵Youth Law Center. *Plaintiffs' Response to Supplemental ICE Report*. Youth Law Center, 2020, www.youthlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/plaintiffs-response-to-supplemental-ice-report.pdf. Accessed 10 Apr. 2026.

⁶Alvarez, Priscilla, and Michael Williams. “Exclusive: Migrant Families Paint Grim Picture of Life in Texas ICE Detention Facility, New Court Documents Show.” *CNN*, 9 Dec. 2025, www.cnn.com/2025/12/09/politics/migrant-families-ice-detention-facility-texas. Accessed 10 Apr. 2026.

⁷Linton, Julie M., et al. “Detention of Immigrant Children.” *Pediatrics*, vol. 139, no. 5, 13 Mar. 2017, p. e20170483, [pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/139/5/e20170483](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-0483), <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-0483>.

Prolonged detention, as seen in Dilley, compounds that harm and raises serious legal and moral concerns. More than 1,300 children have been held at the ICE detention center in Dilley, Texas for longer than 20 days, in violation of the *Flores* Settlement Agreement.⁸ The United States should not be in the business of incarcerating children, particularly those seeking safety or navigating lawful immigration processes in good faith.

People should be free to live in their communities, go to work and school, and provide for their families while they navigate the immigration system. There are proven, humane, and cost-effective alternatives to detention that help people navigate immigration proceedings while preserving family unity and dignity. Case management programs and community-based supervision models have demonstrated high rates of court appearance without resorting to confinement. Expanding these alternatives is not a matter of feasibility, but of political will.

The dangerous conditions, neglect, and abuse that families in ICE detention are currently experiencing demand swift action. Accordingly, I urge you to take immediate steps to:

- End the policy of family detention and halt ICE's detention of minors;
- Close the Dilley detention facility;
- Release all families currently in ICE custody to continue their immigration proceedings in their communities;
- Conduct a full and transparent review of conditions at Dilley and any other facilities where ICE has detained families, including any violations of ICE's standards of care and allegations of medical neglect and abuse; and
- Ensure accountability for any misconduct by facility staff.

The continued detention of children and families is an affront to our values and a stain on our immigration system. It is time to end this practice once and for all. I look forward to your prompt response and to meaningful action on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Adriano Espaillat
Chair
Congressional Hispanic Caucus

CC: Markwayne Mullin, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

⁸Flagg, Anna, and Shannon Heffernan. "ICE Detainees Include More than 3,800 Children So Far This Year." *The Marshall Project*, 17 Dec. 2025, www.themarshallproject.org/2025/12/17/children-immigration-detention-dilley-ice.