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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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DEVELOPMENT

December 18, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane, SW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

We write to express our support for the immediate closure of the Adelanto ICE Processing Center and urge the Department of Homeland Security to take immediate steps to terminate the contract. Earlier this month, Fox News reported¹ that the nearly 2,000 bed-capacity Adelanto Center is on the verge of closing. Adelanto's deplorable conditions have been widely reported and the GEO Group, which runs the facility, has long been responsible for violating the constitutional rights of the people in its custody.

GEO has a long, deadly track record of delaying or denying necessary medical and mental health treatment to immigrants detained at Adelanto. Eight individuals have died as a result, and ICE's own investigation deemed each death preventable.² As Members of Congress, we have been sounding the alarm for nearly a decade about the risks Adelanto poses. Following a 2015 letter³ from NGOs in Southern California detailing poor conditions at the facility, we wrote expressed concerns to the Department of Homeland Security regarding⁴ the issues at Adelanto and urging

¹ Adam Shaw, "ICE to close Calif. facility able to hold 2,000 illegal immigrants amid ongoing crisis: sources" November 30th 2023, Fox News. Available at: <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/ice-close-adelanto-detention-facility-holding-few-migrants-covid-era-court-order-sources.amp>

² ICE Detainee Death Review for Jose Manuel Azuridia Hernandez, Osmar Epifanio Gonzalez, Raul Ernesto Morales, available at: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4598395-Ddr-Azuridia>, <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/reports/ddrGonzalez.pdf>, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2891933-2015AdelantoMorales.html>

³ NGO Letter re Adelanto Medical Care, May 15 2015, available at: <https://www.aclusocal.org/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/NGO-letter-re-Adelanto-medical-care.pdf>

⁴ Congressional Letter to ICE about Adelanto Conditions, July 14, 2015, available at: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2165708-adelanto-letter.html>

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its immediate closure.⁵ Matters have not improved: a recent NPR report⁶ detailed extensive records of abuse and horrendous conditions across the nation, including at Adelanto. GEO's failure to provide appropriate care at Adelanto and other facilities make clear that it is incapable of ensuring the health and safety of individuals detained.

State⁷ and federal oversight agencies⁸ that have inspected Adelanto have identified the same problems, naming serious deficiencies in physical and mental healthcare in particular. Despite these agencies' concerns and recommendations, the same issues have persisted for nearly a decade. GEO's negligent, unconstitutional conduct at the facility has caused ICE to pay judgments and fee awards with taxpayer dollars. These cases also highlight the human cost of immigration detention.

The underlying humanitarian concerns associated with detention facilities—especially those with such a low occupancy rate—show that keeping Adelanto open is both harmful and unnecessary. The mental and physical well-being of those within the facility must be a priority, and a cost-benefit analysis of keeping the center open under such circumstances weighs heavily against its continued operation.

⁵ Congressional Letter to ICE about ICE Detention, October 21st, 2023, available at: <https://lofgren.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/lofgren-evo.house.gov/files/CA%20ICE%20Detention%20Letter.pdf>

⁶ Tom Dreisbach, "Government's own experts found 'barbaric' and 'negligent' conditions in ICE detention," NPR, Aug. 26, 2023, available at: <https://www.npr.org/2023/08/16/1190767610/ice-detention-immigration-government-inspectors-barbaric-negligent-conditions>.

⁷ California Department of Justice, Immigration Detention in California, January 2021, at p. 33, 34, 42, 44 *et seq.*, available at: <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/publications/immigration-detention-2021.pdf>.

⁸ Various reports from CRCL, OIG and EPA are as follows:

DHS CRCL, Adelanto Onsite Inspection, 2016, available at: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23873555-17-adelanto-detention-facility>,

DHS CRCL, Corrections Expert's Report on Adelanto Correctional Facility, 2017, available at: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6278922-HQ-Part2-Copy.html>.

Memorandum for Tae D. Johnson, Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, from Peter E. Mina, Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, June 25, 2021,, available at: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/21_0625_crcl-retention_memo_to_ice_adelanto_processing_center_redacted_508.pdf.

DHS OIG, Management Alert – Issues Requiring Action at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in Adelanto, California, September 28, 2018 OIG-18-86, available at: <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/Mga/2018/oig-18-86-sep18.pdf>.

DHS OIG, Concerns about ICE Detainee Treatment and Care at Four Detention Facilities, June 3, 2019 OIG-19-47, available at: <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-06/OIG-19-47-Jun19.pdf>.

EPA Region 9 Enforcement Division, Inspection Report, 2020, at p. 1, available at: https://earthjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/final_inspection_report_1.pdf.

EPA, Notice of Warning, February 3, 2021 Ref. No. FIFRA-09-2021-4601 at p. 1, available at: https://earthjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/now_geo_final_1.pdf.

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As representatives of millions of Californians who share our values of compassion and a care-centered approaches to immigration, we urge you to redirect the financial resources currently invested in the Adelanto ICE Processing Center towards programs that support community development, education, healthcare, or other vital services that would be a more effective and just use of taxpayer dollars. Doing so would not only demonstrate a commitment to fiscal responsibility but also reflect a more humane and conscientious approach to our immigration system.

We respectfully urge the Department of Homeland Security to take immediate action to close down the Adelanto ICE Processing Center.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Judy Chu
Member of Congress
Chairwoman, Congressional
Asian Pacific American
Caucus

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

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