

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 15, 2019

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary of the Department
of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr
Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

We write to express our deep concern about the reports of inhumane treatment at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities, such as the Otero County Processing Center in Chaparral, New Mexico. We request that you immediately investigate the conditions and oversight for detainees held at all ICE detention facilities to evaluate violations of detention standards and make that report public.

On June 3, 2019, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) published a report identifying violations of ICE's detention standards and raised concerns about the agency's failure to provide adequate conditions for its detainees. We are troubled by continued reports of inhumane treatment at ICE detention facilities that appear to be widespread at facilities housing ICE detainees across the country. New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham wrote to you on October 25, 2019, requesting an investigation of conditions at the Otero County Processing Center that are reportedly leading to attempted suicides, and we write in support of a full review of conditions at that facility and all other ICE detention facilities.

In addition to an investigation of conditions for detainees, we request a full review of the training that officers, agents, and contractors receive related to the processing, medical evaluation and care, and safety of transgender individuals in DHS custody. We are concerned about reports of surveillance footage relating to the death of Roxana Hernandez in U.S. custody that may have been destroyed. We also request that you investigate whether DHS officials adequately complied with applicable laws and regulations regarding the preservation of evidence in connection to detainee deaths in U.S. custody.

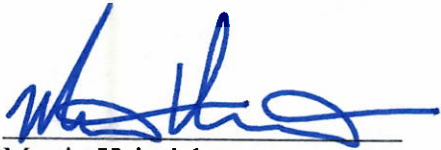
Further, we request that OIG specifically evaluate ICE's practice of long-term detention of individuals with final removal orders whose home countries refuse to accept them back and the overall cost-effectiveness of long-term detention of individuals who do not present a flight risk or a danger to the community.

We believe there is an immediate need to investigate conditions and oversight at ICE detention facilities to provide a full accounting surrounding the treatment of individuals in ICE custody. We also believe that ICE should be fully transparent and publicly disclose all relevant information regarding facilities housing ICE detainees, and we continue to push for humane treatment for all detainees.

Transparency is necessary to understand the full scope of the cruel and misguided policies of this Administration. To ensure everyone held in ICE's custody is treated humanely, we request that you address the following questions as part of your investigation:

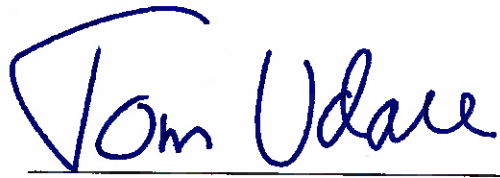
1. What are the Administration's long-term plans for dealing with immigrants with final removal orders whose home countries refuse to accept them back?
2. Is the long-term detention of migrants who do not present a flight risk or danger to the community cost-effective or humane, given the current conditions of the ICE detention system?
3. What are your procedures for dealing with vulnerable individuals who pose a suicide risk? Are suicidal individuals placed in solitary confinement? If so, what are the reasons that justify this practice?
4. What procedures are in place for the long-term care of individuals who have previously attempted suicide?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Tom Udall
United States Senator

CC:

The Honorable Joseph V. Cuffari
Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, D.C. 20528