

COVID-19 PAROLE INFORMATIONAL GUIDE FOR DETAINED INDIVIDUALS

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**FREEDOM
FOR IMMIGRANTS**

**INNOVATION
LAW LAB**



SPLC
**Southern Poverty
Law Center**

ADVISORY UPDATE: *FRAIHAT V. ICE*

APRIL 20, 2020

On April 20, 2020, the Court in *Fraihat v. ICE*, Case No. 5:19-cv-01546-JGB-SHK (C.D. Cal. Apr. 20, 2020), ECF No. 133, issued an order impacting all people in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention with Risk Factors.

People with Risk Factors are people who are over the age of 55, who are pregnant, or have health conditions or disabilities including:

- Chronic health conditions such as:
 - Heart disease (including congestive heart failure, history of myocardial infarction, history of cardiac surgery)
 - High blood pressure (hypertension)
 - Chronic respiratory disease (including asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease including chronic bronchitis or emphysema, or other pulmonary diseases)
 - Diabetes
 - Cancer
 - Liver disease
 - Kidney disease
- Autoimmune diseases (including psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus)
- Severe psychiatric illness
- History of organ transplantation
- HIV/AIDS

For anyone in ICE detention with Risk Factors, ICE is ordered to:

- Identify and track them by April 30, 2020, or within five days of detention (whichever is later)
- Conduct custody redeterminations to determine whether they can be protected from COVID-19 infection in detention or whether they must be released because ICE cannot adequately protect them based on their individual vulnerabilities

ICE is also ordered to update their internal protocols for responding to the pandemic to better protect people who remain in detention from COVID-19 infection and ensure that the requirements of this order be implemented at **every detention facility that detains migrants for more than 72 hours across the nation.**

The Fraihat attorneys are currently working with ICE to set up a hotline where you can dial in for additional support. We will update this advisory when that hotline has been set up.

SEE [SPLCENTER.ORG/FRAIHAT-V-ICE-COMMUNITY-RESOURCES](https://splcenter.org/fraihat-v-ice-community-resources) FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS IMPORTANT COURT DECISION.

Instructions for requesting parole from ICE

This packet is designed to assist you in requesting parole because you are a detained individual at high risk should you contract COVID-19 while detained. This does not constitute legal advice.

STEP 1. IDENTIFY THE SPONSOR

Who can be the sponsor?

The sponsor is a person who agrees to take responsibility for you throughout the process of your immigration case. This person will attest to ICE, in writing, that: (1) they will give you a home to live once you leave detention (2) they will give you financial support (3) they will ensure that you go to your court hearings.

Does the sponsor have to be a relative?

Not necessarily. The rules do not require sponsors to be relatives of people who apply for parole. However, experience shows us that ICE considers it more favorable if the sponsors are familiar. If there is no family member who is willing to be the sponsor, do not give up. Consider other options, such as faith organizations, support for immigrants, or solidarity with compatriots in your country.

Does the sponsor have to be a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S.?

There is no written rule that requires it. However, experience teaches us that ICE rarely approves parole for someone if their sponsor is not a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S. So do your best to locate a sponsor that is a citizen or resident. Additionally, ICE may use information provided to them for other purposes. Consult with an immigration attorney if you have further questions.

STEP 2. COLLABORATE WITH THE SPONSOR TO PREPARE A LETTER OF SUPPORT

What is the purpose of the support letter?

The letter of support is the opportunity to show ICE that the sponsor will honor promises to give the detained individual a home, support them financially, and make sure that they will go to all their hearings in immigration court until their court case is over.

What does the sponsor's letter of support have to say?

The sponsor's letter of support must contain the following elements:

1. Data on sponsor

- full name of sponsor
- physical address of sponsor
- sponsor phone number
- sponsor immigration status (preferably permanent resident or U.S. citizen)

2. The detained individual's information

- their full name
- their A number
- their country of origin

3. Explanation of how the detained individual and the sponsor know each other

- what relationship do they have (for example, married, parent / child, cousins, friends, or met through a migrant support organization)
- how long they've known each other
- anecdotes that show how the sponsor knows the detained individual's character or how close their relationship is

4. Written commitments of sponsor

- a promise that if the detained individual is released on parole, they will live at the address indicated with the sponsor
- a promise that the sponsor is willing to support the detained individual financially during their immigration case

STEP 3. COMPLETE THE PRO SE COVID-19 PAROLE REQUEST FORM

Refer to the Appendix for the **Pro Se COVID-19 Parole Request Form** and accompanying instructions.

STEP 4. COLLECT EVIDENCE

You will need documents that prove several things about you, the detained individual: your identity, that you are not going to miss any court hearings or appointments with immigration if released, and that you are not a danger to the community.

Identity documents

There are several documents that can be included to establish the detained individual's identity. These include: passport, national identification card, birth certificate.

Documentation that the detained individual is not a flight risk

These documents will come mainly from the sponsor. In addition to the sponsor's letter, you will need:

1. *Proof of the sponsor's residential address. Make sure that any document you are going to use contains the name and residential address of your sponsor. Examples:*

- phone bill
- utility bill
- mortgage or lease

2. *Proof of the sponsor's immigration status. Examples:*

- copy of permanent resident card (green card)
- copy of U.S. passport

Documentation that the detained individual is not a danger to the community.

Do you have a criminal record in your home country?

- **No:** try to get a certification of no criminal record from the government of that country
- **Yes:** include evidence that you served any sentence that was imposed, you were rehabilitated, and / or the accusation was motivated by political reasons connected to your persecution. You may submit anything you think could be helpful, including letters of support from the community, awards certificate, letters from your church, etc.

STEP 5. TRANSLATE ANY DOCUMENT THAT IS NOT IN ENGLISH

For any document that is not in English, include the document in the original language, plus two things:

1. A translation of the document into English
2. A translation certificate

The translation certificate should read as follows:

| |
|---|
| <p>CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION</p> <p>I, _____, hereby state that I am fluent in the English and _____ languages, and am competent to translate from _____ to English, and that I have translated the foregoing document fully and accurately to the best of my abilities.</p> <p>Signed: _____</p> <p>Dated: _____</p> |
|---|

STEP 6. SEND THE DOCUMENT

Send all of the documents below to your deportation officer:

- Pro Se COVID-19 Parole Request Form
- Exhibit A: DWN Courting Catastrophe: How ICE is Gambling with Immigrant Lives Amid a Global Pandemic
- Exhibit B: Letter From Dr. Scott Allen and Dr. Josiah Rich to Congress re: Coronavirus and Immigrant Detention
- Exhibit C: Open Letter to ICE From Medical Professionals Regarding COVID-19
- Exhibit D: Sponsor Documents-Exhibit E: Medical Documents

Instructions for Completing the Pro Se COVID-19 Parole Request Form

This Pro Se COVID-19 Parole Request is a document that you can use to help request that you be released from immigration detention for urgent humanitarian reasons. These accompanying instructions are designed to help you complete the request and are not to be used as legal advice. It is always recommended that one attempt to seek the assistance and advice of an experienced immigration attorney. However, it is not required to have an attorney in order to request humanitarian parole.

PAGE 1: BASIC INFORMATION

Write the date you are sending out or completing the request on the line following “Date,” at the top of the first page.

Write down the name of your Deportation Officer on the line following “Deportation Officer.” You will need to send the request and any supporting documents to your Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deportation officer, who works in the Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) Field Office.

If you do not know who your Deportation Officer, try:

- Filling out an ICE Detainee Request or Kite
- Check your immigration paperwork to see if your Deportation Officer’s name appears there
- Ask around in your unit to see if anyone might be able to help you figure it out. Oftentimes, Deportation Officers are assigned to detainees based on the spelling of their last name. A fellow detained individual whose last name begins with the same two letters as your last name(s) might have the same Deportation Officer as you.

Write your full name on the line that ends with “(Full Name).”

Write your A number on the line that ends with “(A Number).” Your A number is a nine-digit number assigned to you by immigration authorities. It will be on your immigration paperwork and any identifying documents given to you at the detention center, such as a wristband or identification card.

Write your full name again on the line in the first paragraph.

PAGES 1-3: I HAVE AN ELEVATED RISK OF CONTRACTING COVID-19 AND SUFFERING SERIOUS HEALTH COMPLICATIONS

This section describes the ways that being detained can put a person at a higher risk of catching Coronavirus. Use the lines provided in this section on page three to write any medical conditions you have and how these conditions impact your health. If the conditions are severe or put you at greater risk of COVID-19, be sure to write this down as well. Use an extra sheet of paper to elaborate if you need to.

Be sure to note any of the following, in addition to any other medical conditions you may have:

- Autoimmune disease(s)
- Heart disease
- Lung disease
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- History of lung or chest infections
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)

PAGE 3: MY CONTINUED DETENTION IS NOT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

You do not need to write anything here. This section explains that continuing to hold you in a detention center is not good for anyone.

PAGE 3: I AM NOT A DANGER TO THE COMMUNITY

On the lines provided on the third page, describe how you are not a danger to the community. If you do not have any criminal history, be sure to say so. If you do have a criminal history, explain why that does not make you a danger to the community. For example, if you have not had any criminal issues in a long time or if you have done things to support your community (volunteer, go to church, etc.), say so.

Note: it is a good idea for any detained person who has criminal history to speak to an immigration attorney before submitting anything to immigration authorities or the immigration court.

PAGE 3: I AM NOT A FLIGHT RISK

On the lines provided on the fourth page, write your sponsor's name and immigration status. Explain how your sponsor knows you and the address where you will be living upon release. If you have family in the U.S., list your family members and relationship to each. Then, state that it is important to you to attend all of your future immigration hearings and explain why that is and why you want to fight for your case.

Note: It is critical that you include a sponsor in the request.

PAGE 3-4: I AM LIKELY TO SUCCEED ON MY APPLICATIONS FOR RELIEF

On the lines provided on page four, describe the immigration relief you are applying for and why it is important to you to keep fighting your case.

PAGE 4: CONCLUSION

If you would like to request that ICE inform someone other than you of the outcome of your parole request, you can include that person's name and contact information on page 5.

Write your sponsor's name on the line ending with "(sponsor or family member name)."

Write your sponsor's contact information on the line ending with "(phone number or email address)."

EXHIBITS

Exhibits A-C are included already. For Exhibit D, include your sponsor's ID documents (a copy of their government-issued identification card, a copy of their Legal Permanent Resident Card if applicable, a copy of their IRS 1040, and a copy of a bill showing the Sponsor's address). For Exhibit E, include any relevant medical documents.

FINALIZING THE PAROLE REQUEST AND SUBMITTING IT

Write your full name and A number on the lines beneath "Sincerely."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR DETAINED INDIVIDUALS

Freedom For Immigrants has a free telephone line you can use that is staffed by volunteers. You can dial 9233 to speak with a volunteer who may be able to find ways to support you.

**SUBMIT ALL OF THE FOLLOWING PAGES
FOR YOUR PAROLE REQUEST**

Pro Se COVID-19 Parole Request Form

Date: _____

Deportation Officer: _____
Assistant Field Office Director
Department of Homeland Security Immigration & Customs Enforcement

RE: REQUEST FOR PAROLE FOR *URGENT HUMANITARIAN REASONS*

For _____ (Full Name)

A# _____ (A Number)

To Whom it May Concern:

I, _____ (Full Name), submit this letter and supporting documents as my request for parole. According to section 212(d)(5)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, the Department of Homeland Security has the power to parole an immigrant for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit. **My parole is merited for urgent humanitarian reasons and significant public benefit.** Additionally, 212(d)(5)(B)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act specifically notes that one scenario where humanitarian parole is justified is when the “alien has a serious medical condition in which continued detention would not be appropriate.”

The COVID-19 pandemic constitutes new circumstances that must be considered in evaluating my parole. I urgently request Humanitarian Parole due to the elevated risk I face as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads within ICE detention centers. The effect of my exposure to this virus could be deadly and given what little information we have about how to test, treat, and control this outbreak, I ask that ICE consider my parole case a priority in the highest order.

I am neither a flight risk nor a danger to the community, and my detention is not in the public interest. DHS should exercise its discretion to release me under humanitarian parole for the following reasons:

I. I HAVE AN ELEVATED RISK OF CONTRACTING COVID-19 AND SUFFERING SERIOUS HEALTH COMPLICATIONS

I am at heightened risk of contracting COVID-19 and suffering serious health complications due to my current detention. Detained individuals face an elevated risk of contracting COVID-19. People in detention are highly vulnerable to outbreaks of contagious illnesses. They are housed in close quarters and are often in poor health. According to Dr. Homer Venters, “[w]hen COVID-19 arrives in a community, it will show up in jails and prisons. This has already happened in China, which has a lower rate of incarceration than the U.S.”¹ For example, even as COVID-19 infection rates have declined in China, the virus continues to spread aggressively across its prisons.²

As Dr. Anne Spaulding put it in a presentation to Correctional facility employees, “a prison or jail is a self-contained environment, both those incarcerated and those who watch over them are at risk for airborne infections. Some make an analogy with a cruise ship. Cautionary tale #1: think of the spread of COVID-19 on the Diamond Princess Cruise Ship, January 2020. Cautionary tale #2: Hundreds of cases diagnosed in Chinese prisons.”³

¹ Dr. Homer Venters, *Four Ways to Protect Our Jails and Prisons from Coronavirus*, The Hill, Feb. 29, 2020, <https://thehill.com/opinion/criminal-justice/485236-4-ways-to-protect-our-jails-and-prisons-from-coronavirus?rnd=1582932792>

² Linda Lew, *China sends in top investigators after coronavirus erupts in jails*, South China Morning Post, Feb. 21, 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3051858/china-sends-top-investigators-after-coronavirus-erupts-jails>.

³ Dr. Anne Spaulding, *Coronavirus and the Correctional Facility: for Correctional Staff Leadership*, Mar. 9, 2020, https://www.ncchc.org/filebin/news/COVID_for_CF Administrators_3.9.2020.pdf.

Older populations, pregnant women and those with preexisting health conditions have a high likelihood of hospital admission to intensive care and might die. According to Dr. Chauolin Huang, “2019-nCoV caused clusters of fatal pneumonia with clinical presentation greatly resembling SARS-CoV. Patients infected with 2019-nCoV might develop acute respiratory distress syndrome, have a high likelihood of admission to intensive care, and might die.”⁴ The CDC recently reported that, “Older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions — like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example — seem to be at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness.”⁵ According to another source, Jialieng Chen, “[M]ost of those who have died had underlying health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes or cardiovascular disease that compromised their immune systems.”⁶

Medical experts on incarcerated populations have strongly recommended that corrections facilities consider compassionate releases for individuals who are older or have pre-existing conditions. As corrections medical expert Dr. Anne Spaulding recently recommended:

“Consider alternatives to incarceration, in order to keep stock population down (diversionary courts, community corrections). Consider measures other than detention...Ask who you can release on their own recognizance?”⁷

Knowing that correctional facilities could be a very dangerous setting for outbreak and that immunodeficient people present a higher risk of serious illness, I should be considered a priority for release from detention for my personal safety and to have access to the best possible medical care if exposed to COVID-19.

Additionally, I am at a heightened risk of suffering life threatening complications if I am exposed to COVID-19 because I suffer from medical conditions.

I have the following medical conditions, which impact my health in the following ways:

II. MY CONTINUED DETENTION IS NOT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Detention is funded by public tax dollars. Even under the best of circumstances it is a costly option when alternatives to detention exist, especially when the detained individual is neither a flight risk nor a danger to the community. It is not in the public interest to manage an outbreak in the detention center and the liability of exposing medically vulnerable people to a contagious outbreak.

4 Chaolin Huang, et al., *Clinical Features of Patients Infected with 2019 Novel Coronavirus in Wuhan, China*, 395 *The Lancet* 497 (2020), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30183-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30183-5) (also available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673620301835>).

5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), People at Higher Risk and Special Populations*, Mar. 7, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/index.html>.

6 Jialieng Chen, *Pathogenicity and transmissibility of 2019-nCoV—A Quick Overview and Comparison with Other Emerging Viruses*, *Microbes and Infection*, Feb. 4, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.micinf.2020.01.004> (also available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1286457920300265>).

7 Dr. Anne Spaulding, *Coronavirus and the Correctional Facility: for Correctional Staff Leadership*, Mar. 9, 2020, https://www.ncchc.org/filebin/news/COVID_for_CF_Administrators_3.9.2020.pdf.

III. I AM NOT A DANGER TO THE COMMUNITY

I do not wish to do anyone harm. I am not a danger to the community for the following reasons and I contribute to my community in the following ways:

IV. I AM NOT A FLIGHT RISK

I am not a flight risk. The following people and organizations will support me with housing, meals, and transportation to my hearings:

V. I AM LIKELY TO SUCCEED ON MY APPLICATIONS FOR RELIEF

I am committed to pursuing my application(s) for relief in the United States. I am eligible for relief from removal and therefore have a strong incentive to appear for future hearings. My objective is to remain in the United States in a lawful manner. I have every incentive to, and will comply with, all obligations required to enable me to remain in the United States. I have already demonstrated my commitment to seeing my case through to the end by remaining in detention to fight my case in spite of the extreme mental and physical health difficulties discussed above.

I want to keep fighting my case for the following reasons:

VI. CONCLUSION

For the above reasons, I respectfully request that I be granted humanitarian parole and released from ICE custody.

If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you in advance for your assistance in this urgent matter. I give ICE permission to, and request that ICE share any decision regarding this request with:

_____ (sponsor or family member name)

at _____ (phone number or email address).

The Exhibits you will find attached to this letter are:

- Exhibit A:** Notice of court order requiring custody re-determinations of individuals with risk factors
- Exhibit B:** Letter From Dr. Scott Allen and Dr. Josiah Rich to Congress re: Coronavirus and Immigrant Detention
- Exhibit C:** Relevant excerpts from Dr. Homer Venters’s declaration, Sanchez Martinez v. Donahue, Case No. 7:20-cv-0062-CDL-MSH (M.D. Ga Apr. 30, 2020)
- Exhibit D:** Sponsor Documents
- Exhibit E:** Medical Documents

Sincerely,

_____ (Full Name)

A# _____ (A Number)

Notice of court order requiring custody re-determinations of individuals with risk factors

Case 5:19-cv-01546-JGB-SHK Document 136 Filed 04/24/20 Page 9 of 14 Page ID #:2671

Exhibit A

NOTICE OF COURT ORDER REQUIRING CUSTODY RE-DETERMINATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH RISK FACTORS FOR COVID-19

IF YOU ARE

- **OVER THE AGE OF 55**
- **PREGNANT**
- **HAVE MEDICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES OR A DISABILITY THAT PLACES YOU AT RISK OF COVID-19**

THEN ICE MUST REVIEW WHETHER IT CAN CONTINUE DETAINING YOU.

On April 20, 2020, a federal court approved a “class action” in a lawsuit called *Fraihat v. ICE*, which challenges medical conditions in ICE detention facilities. A class action is a law suit brought on behalf of a group of people. You are part of this “class” if you have one of the following Risk Factors which puts you at risk of harm from coronavirus/COVID-19:

| | |
|---|---|
| Being over the age of 55; | Kidney disease |
| Being pregnant; | Auto-immune diseases |
| Having chronic health conditions, including: cardiovascular disease (congestive heart failure, history of myocardial infarction or, history of cardiac surgery) | Chronic respiratory disease (asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease including chronic bronchitis or emphysema, or other pulmonary diseases); |
| High blood pressure | Severe psychiatric illness |
| Liver disease | History of transplantation |
| Diabetes | HIV/AIDS |
| Cancer | |

If you have any of these Risk Factors above, then ICE **must** review whether it can continue to hold you in detention. This applies even if you have previously been denied parole, bond, or habeas. This also applies no matter your custody classification, even if you have previously been convicted of a crime that subjects you to mandatory detention.

The lawyers representing the class are working to make sure that ICE follows the court’s April 20 order regarding its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but will not be able to represent you in your immigration case. The law firms for the class are the Southern Poverty Law Center, Civil Rights Education & Enforcement Center, Disability Rights Advocates, Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, and Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP.

If you need additional information about the court's April 20 order or wish to provide additional information, please contact: To Be Provided Pursuant to Order that ICE Ensure Confidential Calling Method

EXHIBIT B

Letter from Drs. Allen and Rich to Congress

Scott A. Allen, MD, FACP
Professor Emeritus, Clinical Medicine
University of California Riverside School of Medicine
Medical Education Building
900 University Avenue
Riverside, CA 92521

Josiah “Jody” Rich, MD, MPH
Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology, Brown University
Director of the Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights
Attending Physician, The Miriam Hospital,
164 Summit Ave.
Providence, RI 02906

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Bennie Thompson
Chairman
House Committee on Homeland Security
310 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
Senate Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member
House Committee on Homeland Security
310 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gary Peters
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
Chairwoman
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Committee Chairpersons and Ranking Members:

We are physicians—an internist and an infectious disease specialist—with unique expertise in medical care in detention settings.¹ We currently serve as medical subject matter experts for the

¹ I, Dr. Scott Allen, MD, FACP, am a Professor Emeritus of Medicine, a former Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and former Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of California Riverside School of Medicine. From 1997 to 2004, I was a full-time correctional physician for the Rhode Island Department of Corrections; for the final three years, I served as the State Medical Program. I have published over 25 peer-reviewed papers in academic journals related to prison health care and am a former Associate Editor of the International Journal of Prisoner Health Care. I am the court appointed monitor for the consent decree in litigation involving

Department of Homeland Security's Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL). One of us (Dr. Allen) has conducted numerous investigations of immigration detention facilities on CRCL's behalf over the past five years. We both are clinicians and continue to see patients, with one of us (Dr. Rich) currently providing care to coronavirus infected patients in an ICU setting.

As experts in the field of detention health, infectious disease, and public health, we are gravely concerned about the need to implement immediate and effective mitigation strategies to slow the spread of the coronavirus and resulting infections of COVID-19. In recent weeks, attention has rightly turned to the public health response in congregate settings such as nursing homes, college campuses, jails, prisons and immigration detention facilities (clusters have already been identified in Chinese and Iranian prisons according to news reports² and an inmate and an officer have reportedly just tested positive at New York's Rikers Island).³ Reporting in recent days reveals that immigrant detainees at ICE's Aurora facility are in isolation for possible exposure to coronavirus.⁴ And a member of ICE's medical staff at a private detention center in New Jersey has now been reported to have tested positive for coronavirus.⁵

We have shared our concerns about the serious medical risks from specific public health and safety threats associated with immigration detention with CRCL's Officer Cameron Quinn in an initial letter dated February 25, 2020, and a subsequent letter of March 13, 2020. We offered to

medical care at Riverside County Jails. I have consulted on detention health issues both domestically and internationally for the Open Society Institute and the International Committee of the Red Cross, among others. I have worked with the Institute of Medicine on several workshops related to detainee healthcare and serve as a medical advisor to Physicians for Human Rights. I am the co-founder and co-director of the Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights at Brown University (www.prisonerhealth.org), and a former Co-Investigator of the University of California Criminal Justice and Health Consortium. I am also the founder and medical director of the Access Clinic, a primary care medical home to adults with developmental disabilities.

I, Dr. Josiah (Jody) Rich, MD, MPH, am a Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, and a practicing Infectious Disease Specialist since 1994 at The Miriam Hospital Immunology Center providing clinical care for over 22 years, and at the Rhode Island Department of Corrections caring for prisoners with HIV infection and working in the correctional setting doing research. I have published close to 190 peer-reviewed publications, predominantly in the overlap between infectious diseases, addictions and incarceration. I am the Director and Co-founder of The Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights at The Miriam Hospital (www.prisonerhealth.org), and a Co-Founder of the nationwide Centers for AIDS Research (CFAR) collaboration in HIV in corrections (CFAR/CHIC) initiative. I am Principal Investigator of three R01 grants and a K24 grant all focused on incarcerated populations. My primary field and area of specialization and expertise is in the overlap between infectious diseases and illicit substance use, the treatment and prevention of HIV infection, and the care and prevention of disease in addicted and incarcerated individuals. I have served as an expert for the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine and others.

² Erin Mendel, "Coronavirus Outbreaks at China Prisons Spark Worries About Unknown Clusters," *Wall Street Journal*, February 21, 2020, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/coronavirus-outbreaks-at-china-prisons-spark-worries-about-unknown-clusters-11582286150>; Center for Human Rights in Iran, "Grave Concerns for Prisoners in Iran Amid Coronavirus Outbreak," February 28, 2020, available at <https://iranhumanrights.org/2020/02/grave-concerns-for-prisoners-in-iran-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/>.

³ Joseph Konig and Ben Feuerherd, "First Rikers Inmate Tests Positive for Coronavirus" *New York Post*. March 18, 2020, available at: <https://nypost.com/2020/03/18/first-rikers-island-inmate-tests-positive-for-coronavirus/>

⁴ Sam Tabachnik, "Ten detainees at Aurora's ICE detention facility isolated for possible exposure to coronavirus," *The Denver Post*, March 17, 2020, available at <https://www.denverpost.com/2020/03/17/coronavirus-ice-detention-geo-group-aurora-colorado/>.

⁵ Emily Kassie, "First ICE Employees Test Positive for Coronavirus," *The Marshall Project*, March 19, 2020, available at <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/03/19/first-ice-employees-test-positive-for-coronavirus>

work with DHS in light of our shared obligation to protect the health, safety, and civil rights of detainees under DHS's care. Additionally, on March 17, 2020 we published an opinion piece in the *Washington Post* warning of the need to act immediately to stem the spread of the coronavirus in jails and prisons in order to protect not only the health of prisoners and corrections workers, but the public at large.⁶

In the piece we noted the parallel risks in immigration detention. We are writing now to formally share our concerns about the imminent risk to the health and safety of immigrant detainees, as well as to the public at large, that is a direct consequence of detaining populations in congregate settings. We also offer to Congress, as we have to CRCL, our support and assistance in addressing the public health challenges that must be confronted as proactively as possible to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus both in, and through, immigration detention and congregate settings.

Nature of the Risk in Immigration Detention and Congregate Settings

One of the risks of detention of immigrants in congregant settings is the rapid spread of infectious diseases. Although much is still unknown, the case-fatality rate (number of infected patients who will die from the disease) and rate of spread for COVID-19 appears to be as high or higher than that for influenza or varicella (chicken pox).

In addition to spread within detention facilities, the **extensive transfer of individuals** (who are often without symptoms) throughout the detention system, which occurs with great frequency in the immigration context, could rapidly disseminate the virus throughout the entire system with devastating consequences to public health.⁷

Anyone can get a coronavirus infection. While healthy children appear to suffer mildly if they contract COVID-19, they still pose risk as carriers of infection, particularly so because they may not display symptoms of illness.⁸ Family detention continues to struggle with managing outbreaks of influenza and varicella.⁹ Notably, seven children who have died in and around

⁶ Josiah Rich, Scott Allen, and Mavis Nimoh, "We must release prisoners to lessen the spread of coronavirus," *Washington Post*, March 17, 2020, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/03/17/we-must-release-prisoners-lesser-spread-coronavirus/>.

⁷ See Hamed Aleaziz, "A Local Sheriff Said No To More Immigrant Detainees Because of Coronavirus Fears. So ICE Transferred Them All To New Facilities," *BuzzFeed News*, March 18, 2020 (ICE recently transferred 170 immigrant detainees from Wisconsin to facilities in Texas and Illinois. "In order to accommodate various operational demands, ICE routinely transfers detainees within its detention network based on available resources and the needs of the agency...," an ICE official said in a statement.), available at <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hamedaleaziz/wisconsin-sheriff-ice-detainees-coronavirus>

⁸ Interview with Jay C. Butler, MD, Deputy Director for Infectious Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Testing," *JAMA Network*, March 16, 2020, available at <https://youtu.be/oGiOi7eV05g> (min 19:00).

⁹ Indeed, I (Dr. Allen) raised concerns to CRCL, the DHS Office of Inspector General, and to Congress in July 2018, along with my colleague Dr. Pamela McPherson, about the risks if harm to immigrant children in family detention centers because of specific systemic weaknesses at those facilities in their ability to provide for the medical and mental health needs of children in detention. See, e.g., July 17, 2018 [Letter to Senate Whistleblower Caucus Chairs](#) from Drs. Scott Allen and Pamela McPherson, available at <https://www.wyden.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Doctors%20Congressional%20Disclosure%20SWC.pdf>. Those concerns, including but not limited to inadequate medical staffing, a lack of translation services, and the risk of

immigration detention, according to press reports, six died of infectious disease, including three deaths from influenza.¹⁰ Containing the spread of an infection in a congregate facility housing families creates the conditions where many of those infected children who do not manifest symptoms will unavoidably spread the virus to older family members who may be a higher risk of serious illness.

Finally, as you well know, social distancing is essential to slow the spread of the coronavirus to minimize the risk of infection and to try to reduce the number of those needing medical treatment from the already-overwhelmed and inadequately prepared health care providers and facilities. However, social distancing is an oxymoron in congregate settings, which because of the concentration of people in a close area with limited options for creating distance between detainees, are at very high risk for an outbreak of infectious disease. This then creates an enormous public health risk, not only because disease can spread so quickly, but because those who contract COVID-19 with symptoms that require medical intervention will need to be treated at local hospitals, thus increasing the risk of infection to the public at large and overwhelming treatment facilities.

As local hospital systems become overwhelmed by the patient flow from detention center outbreaks, precious health resources will be less available for people in the community. To be more explicit, a detention center with a rapid outbreak could result in multiple detainees—five, ten or more—being sent to the local community hospital where there may only be six or eight ventilators over a very short period. As they fill up and overwhelm the ventilator resources, those ventilators are unavailable when the infection inevitably is carried by staff to the community and are also unavailable for all the usual critical illnesses (heart attacks, trauma, etc). In the alternate scenario where detainees are released from high risk congregate settings, the tinderbox scenario of a large cohort of people getting sick all at once is less likely to occur, and the peak volume of patients hitting the community hospital would level out. In the first scenario, many people from the detention center *and the community* die unnecessarily for want of a ventilator. In the latter, survival is maximized as the local mass outbreak scenario is averted.

It is additionally concerning that dozens of immigration detention centers are in remote areas with limited access to health care facilities. Many facilities, because of the rural locations, have only one on-site medical provider. If that provider gets sick and requires being quarantined for at least fourteen days, the entire facility could be without any medical providers at all during a foreseeable outbreak of a rapidly infectious disease. We simply can't afford a drain on resources/medical personnel from any preventable cases.

communication breakdowns and confusion that results from different lines of authority needing to coordinate between various agencies and partners from different government programs and departments responsible for detention programs with rapid turnover, all continue to contribute to heightened risks to meeting the medical challenges posed by the spread of the coronavirus.

¹⁰ Nicole Acevedo, "Why are children dying in U.S. custody?," *NBC News*, May 29, 2019, available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/why-are-migrant-children-dying-u-s-custody-n1010316>

Proactive Approaches Required

Before coronavirus spreads through immigration detention, proactivity is required in three primary areas: 1) Processes for screening, testing, isolation and quarantine; 2) Limiting transport and transfer of immigrant detainees; and 3) Implementing alternatives to detention to facilitate as much social distancing as possible.

Protocols for early screening, testing, isolation and quarantine exist in detention settings to address infectious diseases such as influenza, chicken pox and measles. However, the track record of ICE facilities implementing these protocols historically has been inconsistent. In the current scenario, with widespread reporting about the lack of available tests for COVID-19 and challenges for screening given the late-onset display of symptoms for what is now a community-spread illness, detention facilities, like the rest of country, are already behind the curve for this stage of mitigation.

Detention facilities will need to rapidly identify cases and develop plans to isolate exposed cohorts to limit the spread, as well as transfer ill patients to appropriate facilities. Screening should occur as early as possible after apprehension (including at border holding facilities) to prevent introduction of the virus into detention centers. We strongly recommend ongoing consultation with CDC and public health officials to forge optimal infection prevention and control strategies to mitigate the health risks to detained patient populations and correctional workers. Any outbreak in a facility could rapidly overwhelm the capacity of healthcare programs. Partnerships with local public health agencies, hospitals and clinics, including joint planning exercises and preparedness drills, will be necessary.

Transferring detainees between facilities should be kept to an absolute minimum. The transfer process puts the immigrants being transferred, populations in the new facilities, and personnel all at increased risk of exposure. The nationwide network of detention centers, where frequent and routine inter-facility transfers occur, represents a frighteningly efficient mechanism for rapid spread of the virus to otherwise remote areas of the country where many detention centers are housed.

Finally, regarding the need to implement immediate social distancing to reduce the likelihood of exposure to detainees, facility personnel, and the general public, ***it is essential to consider releasing all detainees who do not pose an immediate risk to public safety.***

Congregant settings have a high risk of rapid spread of infectious diseases, and wherever possible, public health mitigation efforts involve moving people out of congregant settings (as we are seeing with colleges and universities and K-12 schools).¹¹ Minimally, DHS should consider releasing all detainees in high risk medical groups such as older people and those with

¹¹ Madeline Holcombe, "Some schools closed for coronavirus in US are not going back for the rest of the academic year," *CNN*, March 18, 2020, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/18/us/coronavirus-schools-not-going-back-year/index.html>; Eric Levenson, Chris Boyette and Janine Mack, "Colleges and universities across the US are canceling in-person classes due to coronavirus," *CNN*, March 12, 2020, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/09/us/coronavirus-university-college-classes/index.html>.

chronic diseases. COVID-19 infection among these groups will require many to be transferred to local hospitals for intensive medical and ventilator care—highly expensive interventions that may soon be in short supply.

Given the already established risks of adverse health consequences associated with the detention of children and their families,¹² the policy of detention of children and their families in should be reconsidered in light of these new infectious disease threats so that children would only be placed in congregate detention settings when lower risk community settings are not available and then for as brief a time as possible.

In addition, given the low risk of releasing detainees who do not pose a threat to public safety—i.e., those only charged with immigration violations—releasing *all* immigration detainees who do not pose a security risk should be seriously considered in the national effort to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Similarly, the practice of forcing asylum seekers to remain in Mexico has created a *de facto* congregate setting for immigrants, since large groups of people are concentrated on the US southern border as a result of the MPP program in the worst of hygienic conditions without any basic public health infrastructure or access to medical facilities or the ability to engage in social distancing as they await asylum hearings, which are currently on hold as a consequence of the government's response to stop the spread of the coronavirus.¹³ This is a tinderbox that cannot be ignored in the national strategy to slow the spread of infection.

ICE recently announced that in response to the coronavirus pandemic, it will delay arresting immigrants who do not pose public safety threats, and will also stop detaining immigrants who fall outside of mandatory detention guidelines.¹⁴ But with reporting that immigrant detainees at ICE facilities are already being isolated for possible exposure to coronavirus, it is not enough to simply stop adding to the existing population of immigrant detainees. Social distancing through release is necessary to slow transmission of infection.¹⁵

Reassessing the security and public health risks, and acting immediately, will save lives of not only those detained, but also detention staff and their families, and the community-at-large.

¹² Report of the DHS Advisory Committee on Family Residential Centers, September 30, 2016, available at <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Report/2016/ACFRC-sc16093.pdf>

¹³ See Rick Jervis, "Migrants waiting at US-Mexico border at risk of coronavirus, health experts warn," *USA Today*, March 17, 2020, available at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/03/17/us-border-could-hit-hard-coronavirus-migrants-wait-mexico/5062446002/>.

¹⁴ ICE website, Guidance on COVID-19, Immigration and Enforcement Check-Ins, Updated March 18, 2020, 7:45 pm, available at <https://www.ice.gov/covid19>.

¹⁵ Release of immigrants from detention to control the coronavirus outbreak has been recommended by John Sandweg, former acting head of ICE during the Obama administration, who further noted, "The overwhelming majority of people in ICE detention don't pose a threat to public safety and are not an unmanageable flight risk. . . . Unlike the Federal Bureau of Prisons, ICE has complete control over the release of individuals. ICE is not carrying out the sentence imposed by a federal judge. . . . It has 100% discretion." See Camilo Montoya-Galvez, "'Powder kegs': Calls grow for ICE to release immigrants to avoid coronavirus outbreak," *CBS News*, March 19, 2020, available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/coronavirus-ice-release-immigrants-detention-outbreak/>.

Our legal counsel, Dana Gold of the Government Accountability Project, is supporting and coordinating our efforts to share our concerns with Congress and other oversight entities about the substantial and specific threats to public health and safety the coronavirus poses by congregate settings for immigrants. As we similarly offered to DHS, we stand ready to aid you in any way to mitigate this crisis and prevent its escalation in light of our unique expertise in detention health and experience with ICE detention specifically. Please contact our attorney, Dana Gold, at danag@whistleblower.org, or her colleague, Irvin McCullough, at irvinm@whistleblower.org, with any questions.

Sincerely,

/s/

Scott A. Allen, MD, FACP
Professor Emeritus, University of California, School of Medicine
Medical Subject Matter Expert, CRCL, DHS

/s/

Josiah D. Rich, MD, MPH
Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology
The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Medical Subject Matter Expert, CRCL, DHS

Cc: Dana Gold, Esq. and Irvin McCullough, Government Accountability Project
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
House Committee on the Judiciary
White House Coronavirus Task Force

Relevant excerpts from Dr. Homer Venters's declaration, *Sanchez Martinez v. Donahue*, Case No. 7:20-cv-0062-CDL-MSH (M.D. Ga Apr. 30, 2020)

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DECLARATION OF HOMER VENTERS, M.D.

I, Homer Venters, declare the following under penalty of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746 as follows:

BACKGROUND

1. I am a physician, internist and epidemiologist with over a decade of experience in providing, improving and leading health services for incarcerated people. My clinical training includes a residency in internal medicine at Albert Einstein/Montefiore Medical Center (2007) and a fellowship in public health research at the New York University School of Medicine (2009). My experience in correctional health includes two years visiting immigration detention centers and conducting analyses of physical and mental health policies and procedures for persons detained by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. This work included and resulted in collaboration with ICE on numerous individual cases of medical release, formulation of health-related policies as well as testimony before the U.S. Congress regarding mortality inside ICE detention facilities.
2. After my fellowship training, I became the Deputy Medical Director of the NYC Jail Correctional Health Service. This position included both direct care to persons held in NYC's 12 jails, as well as oversight of medical policies for their care. This role included oversight of chronic care, sick call, specialty referral and emergency care. I subsequently was promoted to the positions of Medical Director, Assistant Commissioner, and Chief Medical Officer. In the latter two roles, I was responsible for all aspects of health services including physical and mental health, addiction, quality improvement, re-entry and morbidity and mortality reviews as well as all training and oversight of physicians, nursing and pharmacy staff. In these roles I was also responsible for evaluating and making recommendations on the health implications of numerous security policies and practices including use of force and restraints. During this time, I managed multiple communicable disease outbreaks including H1N1 in 2009, which impacted almost a third of housing areas inside the adolescent jail, multiple seasonal influenza outbreaks, a recurrent legionella infection and several other smaller outbreaks.
3. In March 2017, I left Correctional Health Services of NYC to become the Director of Programs for Physicians for Human Rights. In this role, I oversaw all programs of Physicians for Human Rights, including training of physicians, judges and law enforcement staff on forensic evaluation and documentation, analysis of mass graves and mass atrocities, documentation of torture and sexual violence, and analysis of attacks against healthcare workers.
4. In December 2018 I became the Senior Health and Justice Fellow for Community Oriented Correctional Health Services (COCHS), a nonprofit organization that promotes

evidence-based improvements to correctional practices across the U.S. In January 2020, I became the president of COCHS. I also work as a medical expert in cases involving correctional health and I wrote a book on the health risks of jail (*Life and Death in Rikers Island*) which was published in early 2019 by Johns Hopkins University Press. A copy of my curriculum vitae, which includes my publications, a listing of cases in which I have been involved and a statement of my compensation, is attached to this report.

TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19

5. Information and understanding about the transmissibility of the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) is rapidly evolving. New information is relevant to the health of ICE detainees and staff.
 - a. In addition to transmission by aerosolized droplets expelled from the mouth by speaking, coughing, sneezing, and breathing, COVID-19 appears to be transmissible through aerosolized fecal contact. This is relevant because the plume of aerosolized fecal material that occurs when a toilet is flushed is not addressable in many detention centers because ICE detainee toilets generally lack lids. This mode of transmission would pose a threat to anyone sharing a cell with a person who has COVID-19 and could occur before a person becomes symptomatic. This mode of transmission could also extend beyond cellmates, especially in circumstances where common bathrooms exist or where open communication between cells exists.¹
 - b. CDC and state guidance now recommend the use of protective masks for anyone who is in close contact with others, at less than 6 feet distance.² This recommendation applies to staff and detainees alike.

COVID-19 IN ICE DETENTION

6. COVID-19 is a viral pandemic. This is a novel virus for which there is no established curative medical treatment and no vaccine.
7. ICE has not been able to stop the spread of COVID-19 in detention centers. ICE reported that, as of April 7, there were 19 detained people in 11 facilities, 11 ICE employees in 6 facilities, and 60 ICE employees not assigned to a facility who had all tested positive for COVID-19. As of April 20, less than two weeks later, ICE reported a jump to 220 detained people in 28 facilities, 30 ICE employees in 9 facilities, and 86 ICE employees

¹ <https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectiousdisease/covid19/85315>.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>.

not assigned to a facility who had tested positive for COVID-19.³ These numbers, which do not include non-ICE staff and contractors at the facilities, are likely just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the number of ICE staff and detainees who are already infected but are unaware due to the lack of testing nationwide, and the fact that people who are infected can be asymptomatic for several days.

8. When COVID-19 impacts a community, it will also impact the detention facilities. In New York, one of the areas of early spread in the U.S., multiple correctional officers and jail and prison inmates have become infected with COVID-19. The medical leadership in the NYC jail system have announced that they will be unable to stop COVID from entering their facilities and have called for release as the primary response to this crisis. Staff are more likely to bring COVID-19 into a facility, based solely on their movement in and out every day.
9. Once COVID-19 is inside a facility, ICE will be unable to stop the spread of the virus throughout the facility given long-existing inadequacies in ICE's medical care and also in light of how these facilities function. ICE has faced longstanding challenges in maintaining adequate health staffing for many years, and the outbreak of this pandemic will dramatically worsen this problem.
10. I have been inside multiple ICE detention facilities, both county jails that house ICE detainees and dedicated facilities. My experience is that the densely packed housing areas, the structure of health services, food services, recreation, bathroom and shower facilities for detained people, as well as the arrangement of entry points, locker rooms, meal areas, and control rooms for staff, all contribute to many people being in small spaces.
11. Detention facilities are designed to force close contact between people and rely on massive amounts of movement every day from one part of the facility to another, e.g., for programming, access to cafeterias, commissary, and medical, just to name a few. This movement is required of detained people as well as staff. My experience managing smaller outbreaks is that it is impossible to apply hospital-level infection control measures on security staff. In a hospital or nursing home, staff may move up and down a single hallway over their shift, and they may interact with one patient at a time. In detention settings, officers move great distances, are asked to shout or yell commands to large numbers of people, routinely apply handcuffs and operate heavy doors/gates, operate large correctional keys and are trained in the use of force. These basic duties cause the personal protective equipment they are given to quickly break and become

³ *ICE Guidance on COVID-19*, IMMIGRATION & CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (Updated Apr. 20, 2020), <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus>.

useless, and even when in good working order, may impede their ability to talk and be understood, in the case of masks. For officers working in or around patients at risk or with symptoms, there may be an effort to have them wear protective gowns, as one would in any other setting with similar clinical risks. These gowns cover their radios, cut down their ability to use tools and other equipment located on their belts and in my experience working with correctional staff, are basically impossible to use as a correctional officer.

12. Efforts to lock detained people into cells will worsen, not improve this facility-level contribution to infection control. Units that are comprised of locked cells require additional staff to escort people to and from their cells for showers and other encounters, and medical, pharmacy and nursing staff move on and off these units daily to assess the welfare and health needs of these people, creating the same movement of virus from the community into the facilities as if people were housed in normal units.

ICE RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN DETENTION CENTERS IS DEFICIENT

13. On the whole, ICE's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is grossly deficient and at odds with recommendations of the CDC regarding detention settings in a manner that threatens the health and survival of ICE detainees. I've reviewed available documents regarding their planning, including the March 6, 2020 interim guidance sheet provided by ICE Health Service Corps,⁴ March 27, 2020 Memorandum to ICE wardens ("March 27 memo"),⁵ ICE's guidance on its website,⁶ the April 4, 2020 Docket Review memo,⁷ and the April 10, 2020 ERO COVID-19 Pandemic Response Requirements ("ERO document").

A. The March 6 and March 27 Memoranda

14. I have reviewed ICE's March 6 and March 27, 2020 documents addressing COVID-19 (together, the "March 2020 ICE Protocols"); although I understand the March 6 interim guidance policies to be superseded by the April 10, 2020 ERO document, it is worth noting that these policies were deficient and at odds with recommendations of the CDC regarding detention settings in a manner that threatens the health and survival of ICE detainees. The April 10 ERO document mandates compliance with the March 27 memo, which also fails to comply with CDC guidance.

15. ICE's March 27 memo takes the dangerous approach of limiting clinical guidelines for COVID-19 response to the detainees being provided direct care by ICE Health Services

⁴ <https://www.aila.org/infonet/ice-interim-reference-sheet-coronavirus>.

⁵ <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/coronavirus/attF.pdf>.

⁶ <https://www.ice.gov/covid19>.

⁷ <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/coronavirus/attk.pdf>.

Corps (IHSC) staff, which represents approximately 13,000 detainees.⁸ As a result, detention centers operated by public and private contractors are not provided with this guidance. This approach to management of the COVID-19 outbreak ensures that vital information would remain in these facilities, instead of being acted upon by ICE. As a result, ICE could not have known when its own policies or even basic standards of infection control were being followed.

16. The March 2020 ICE Protocols failed to address the key recommendation of the CDC on the need for adequate staffing and training of staff. ICE's March 27 memo simply states that "facilities are expected to be appropriately staffed," but provides no guidance whatsoever on how that could be accomplished in the context of existing staffing gaps, a decreased workforce, and increased needs resulting from steps required to screen, monitor and treat detainees for COVID-19. CDC Detention Guidelines make clear the need for a concrete plan for ensuring adequate staffing as part of the COVID-19 response.⁹ These guidelines also make clear the need to orient staff to the critical need to stay home if and when they experience symptoms of COVID-19 infection. The March 27 guidance mentions only the "expectation" of appropriate staffing levels rather than implementing any meaningful oversight system to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate. Critically, appropriate staffing levels refers not only to a sufficient number of staff but also to a sufficient number of qualified staff. In my experience, many facilities rely heavily on guards and LPNs to do medical work that they are not qualified to do; likewise, many facilities rely on RNs to do medical work that only doctors or physician-assistants are qualified to do. There is no indication whatsoever that ICE is implementing procedures to ensure not only sufficient numbers of staff but also sufficient numbers of qualified staff. This is a very serious defect because access to qualified medical professionals is crucial during this rapidly evolving pandemic.
17. The March 2020 ICE Protocols failed to address the key recommendation of the CDC on the need for adequate intake screening of detainees. CDC Detention Guidelines make clear that everyone arriving in a detention facility should be screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, but the March 2020 ICE Protocols relied on questions about travel or other known contacts as a precursor to temperature checks and other sign and symptom checks. It is likely that almost everyone in the general public who is not practicing social distancing is in contact with the COVID-19 virus, and these questions give a false impression that they will somehow help identify those most likely to have this type of contact. According to the CDC, the appropriate focus should be on checking for active symptoms including fever and known sick contacts of any type every time a

⁸ <https://www.ice.gov/ice-health-service-corps>.

⁹ Guidance for Correctional & Detention Facilities ("CDC Detention Guidelines")
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/guidance-correctional-detention.html>.

person, whether a staff member or detained person, enters an ICE facility. The March 2020 ICE Protocols also failed to clearly mandate that all symptomatic patients be immediately given a mask and placed in medical isolation, and that all staff who have further contact with that patient wear personal protective equipment, as set forth in the CDC Detention Guidelines. These protocols also failed to address the now-standard CDC advice that everyone who cannot engage in social distancing wear a face covering.¹⁰

18. The March 2020 ICE Protocols provided no guidance about identification of high-risk patients at the time of entry or any special precautions that would be enacted to protect them. The protocol also failed to address the identification of high-risk patients who have already been admitted.
19. The March 2020 ICE Protocols stated that people with suspected COVID-19 contact would be monitored for 14 days with symptom checks. The protocols were written as if this would be a rare occurrence, reflecting smaller outbreak management, but the prevalence of COVID-19 has grown to such an extent that a large share of newly arrived people will have recent contact with someone who is infected. ICE would need to use this level of monitoring for every person arriving in detention. Accordingly, ICE would need to dramatically expand its medical facilities and staffing to conduct this daily monitoring of every newly arrived person for 14 days. The protocols failed to contemplate these necessary changes.
20. The March 2020 ICE Protocols failed to address the key recommendation of the CDC on the need for monitoring and care of symptomatic patients.
 - a. The CDC Detention Guidelines make clear that patients who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should be immediately placed in medical isolation. The March 2020 ICE Protocols only invoked this response for newly arrived detainees who also answered yes to screening questions. This approach results in a failure to actively screen the large majority of detainees: people who are already detained.
 - b. CDC Detention Guidelines clearly indicate the need for twice-daily monitoring of patients who are symptomatic or in quarantine, and ICE only mandated a daily check.
 - c. ICE made no mention of access to masks for patients in quarantine settings.
 - d. ICE failed to present a plan for how isolation would be conducted when the number of people exceeded the number of existing isolation rooms or cells, a near certainty.

¹⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>.

21. The March 2020 ICE Protocols failed to address the key recommendation of the CDC Detention Guidelines on the need for social distancing. ICE's March 27 memo mentions social distancing briefly, but fails to address how ICE facilities will enact modified meal or recreation times and also fails to address the most common scenarios in which high risk detainees find themselves in close quarters, including shared cells, medication lines, bathroom facilities, common walkways and day rooms, sally ports and transportation. Again, because there is no cure for COVID-19, social distancing remains the most effective means of prevention, and ICE failed to meaningfully implement this precaution in its March 2020 guidance.
22. The March 2020 ICE Protocols failed to address the recommendation of the CDC Detention Guidelines on the need to limit transportation of detainees as a means to limit the spread of COVID-19. CDC Detention Guidelines state that transfers should be limited to those that are absolutely necessary and that receiving facilities must have capacity to isolate symptomatic patients upon arrival. ICE protocols failed to address these issues. CDC Detention Guidelines make clear the need for a clear plan for all aspects of transport of suspected COVID-19 infected people, and ICE does not have or did not report such a plan. The CDC Detention Guidelines recommend a level of infection control measures in transportation of symptomatic or potentially COVID-19 positive patients that would require far more staffing and training than ICE has the capacity to provide for large scale transfers: "If a transfer is absolutely necessary, perform verbal screening and a temperature check as outlined in the Screening section below, before the individual leaves the facility. If an individual does not clear the screening process, delay the transfer and follow the protocol for a suspected COVID-19 case – including putting a face mask on the individual, immediately placing them under medical isolation, and evaluating them for possible COVID-19 testing. If the transfer must still occur, ensure that the receiving facility has capacity to properly isolate the individual upon arrival. Ensure that staff transporting the individual wear recommended PPE . . . and that the transport vehicle is cleaned thoroughly after transport." In other words, transferring people between facilities, as ICE routinely does and as I understand is still going on, requires far more measures than ICE implements and should be ceased.
23. The March 2020 ICE Protocols failed to address the recommendation of the CDC Detention Guidelines on the need for environmental cleaning of both housing areas and other common spaces within facilities. CDC Detention Guidelines provide clear details about the types of cleaning agents and cleaning processes that should be employed, while ICE provided no guidance to facilities on this critical issue. Reliance on detainees for conducting critical environmental cleaning, without proper training, protection or supervision, represents a gross deviation from correctional practices, and will likely contribute to the spread of COVID-19 throughout the ICE detention system.

B. The April 4, 2020 Docket Review Guidance

24. None of the ICE COVID-19 protocols set forth sufficient policies or protocols addressing release of medically vulnerable detained people in light of the significant risks to those people posed by COVID-19. This must be done immediately and is in contrast to the efforts made in many prison and jail systems across the country.
25. The April 4 list of risk factors for serious illness and death from COVID-19 infection developed by ICE is inconsistent with CDC guidelines and fails to adequately advise facilities on which detainees are at elevated risk. This list is included in a memo to Field Office Directors regarding Docket Review, and fails to include very basic risk factors identified by the CDC, including body mass index over 40 and being a current or former smoker.¹¹ By apparently assigning this process to field directors and their staff, who are not medical professionals, advising security staff to check with medical professionals after the fact, and failing to include CDC-identified risk factors, this docket review process will likely leave many people with true risk factors in detention. This is particularly the case if they're detained under certain immigration law provisions, where the guidance recommends officers not release them despite risks. Thus, the guidance appears to be just that – guidance, and the risk factors are not determinative. In fact, the guidance appears to not make these risk factors determinative for release—even for people who are not subject to mandatory detention. ICE also identifies people under the age of 60 in this cohort but the age of 55 is appropriate. Because detained people have consistently been identified as having higher levels of health problems that reflect that they are 10-15 years more progressed than chronological age, numerous organizations and research studies have used the age of 55 to define the lower limit of older detainees.¹² ICE also limits the high risk period for women to 2 weeks after child birth, yet one of the most serious increased risk during pregnancy is hypercoagulable state, which increases the risk of blood clots in the large veins of the lower extremities, and sometimes in the lung which can prove fatal. This risk extends to 6 weeks post-partum and also occurs independently with COVID-19 infection.¹³ Accordingly, ICE should include these definitions in its list of risk factors. ICE should also put in place a mechanism to ensure that risk factors reflect the evolving science and data concerning COVID-19, since it is likely that additional risk factors will emerge as more data is collected.
26. The April 4 promulgation of an incomplete list of risk factors in a memo relating to discretion for release occurs in a complete vacuum of guidance on special protection and

¹¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/groups-at-higher-risk.html> and <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6913e2.htm>.

¹² <https://nicic.gov/aging-prison> and <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3464842/>.

¹³ <https://www.acog.org/patient-resources/faqs/womens-health/preventing-deep-vein-thrombosis> and <https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectiousdisease/covid19/85865>.

- ii. Regular Monitoring: As long as the employee doesn't have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program.
 - iii. Wear a Mask: The employee should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue face masks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
 - iv. Social Distance: The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace.
 - v. Disinfect and Clean work spaces: Clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.
- b. In addition, the ERO document provides no guidance on how facilities should act if one of these staff members with a known/suspected contact becomes ill at work. The CDC provides clear guidance however:
- i. "If the employee becomes sick during the day, they should be sent home immediately. Surfaces in their workspace should be cleaned and disinfected. Information on persons who had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms should be compiled. Others at the facility with close contact within 6 feet of the employee during this time would be considered exposed."
- c. Key CDC recommendations for detainees who have contact with a known or suspected case of COVID-19 are similarly left out of the ERO document. The ERO document addresses this aspect of facility management with the following: "If an individual is a close contact of a known COVID-19 case or has traveled to an affected area (but has no COVID-19 symptoms), quarantine the individual and monitor for symptoms two times per day for 14 days." This omits several critical aspects of CDC guidelines that bear on this very scenario, the quarantine of detainees who have contacts with suspected or known cases. In the section on "Management," the CDC Detention Guidelines include specific protocols applicable to quarantine. Examples of these protocols include:¹⁵

¹⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/guidance-correctional-detention.html#management>.

- i. Provide PPE to staff working in quarantine settings, and masks to detainees in these settings.
 - ii. **Quarantined individuals should be monitored for COVID-19 symptoms twice per day, including temperature checks.**
 - iii. **Meals should be provided to quarantined individuals in their quarantine spaces.** Individuals under quarantine should throw disposable food service items in the trash. Non-disposable food service items should be handled with gloves and washed with hot water or in a dishwasher. Individuals handling used food service items should clean their hands after removing gloves.
30. The ERO document mandates that every facility holding ICE detainees have a COVID-19 mitigation plan in place. The ERO document specifies the following: “Consistent with ICE detention standards, all facilities housing ICE detainees are required to have a COVID-19 mitigation plan that meets the following four objectives:
 - a. To protect employees, contractors, detainees, visitors to the facility, and stakeholders from exposure to the virus;
 - b. To maintain essential functions and services at the facility throughout the pendency of the pandemic;
 - c. To reduce movement and limit interaction of detainees with others outside their assigned housing units, as well as staff and others, and to promote social distancing within housing units; and
 - d. To establish means to monitor, cohort, quarantine, and isolate the sick from the well.
31. My experience in reviewing policies and procedures in detention settings around the nation is that many facilities holding ICE detainees do not have such a plan and that since a critical part of the CDC recommendations include preparation for COVID-19, many facilities have already failed to meet many basic elements of the COVID-19 responses recommended by the CDC. Even if ICE is able to ensure and report that every facility has created such a plan, it is likely that the lack of COVID-19 response plan to prepare many facilities and respond to the early stages of the outbreak will increase the risk of serious illness or death. Many ICE facilities are in the throes of COVID-19 infection, and waiting until this pandemic is at its peak to require a mitigation plan represents a gross deviation from both CDC guidelines and basic correctional practice. Key areas of work that must be conducted before COVID-19 arrives include training of staff, ordering of supplies,

planning for quarantine housing and monitoring, and identification of surge staffing. Starting these basic tasks immediately makes it much less likely that facilities will succeed in their efforts to slow spread of the virus.

32. The ERO document identifies a list of high-risk conditions that is inconsistent with the guidance given by ERO just days earlier and fails to adhere to CDC guidelines.
 - a. The new ERO document fails to identify pregnant or post-partum women. The ERO docket review guidelines dated April 4, 2020, failed to identify smoking history or body mass index over 40 as risk factors, both of which are included by the CDC.
 - b. The age for older detainees was indicated as 65 in the new ERO document and 60 in the prior document. The correct age, based on correctional standards, should be 55.
33. The purpose of the ERO document's identification of high-risk patients is unclear beyond custody review, but it fails to establish any higher level of protection from COVID-19 infection.
 - a. The prescribed actions in the ERO document regarding high-risk detainees include identifying who they are, emailing their name, location, medical issues and medications, and facility point of contact information to ICE headquarters apparently for review for release.
 - b. No guidance is given about how these high-risk patients can be protected from being infected with COVID-19, unless and until they are in a quarantine area or have been identified as symptomatic.
 - c. Having identified the detainees who are at increased risk of serious illness and death, and initiated a process to effectuate their release based on that risk, ICE must also create increased surveillance of these detainees, including twice daily symptom checks with temperature checks.
34. The ERO document creates an unwieldy and unrealistic process for facilities to notify ICE headquarters regarding high risk detainees.
 - a. The process of requiring every facility to send emails about every individual detainee with risk factors is unwieldy and unlikely to be effective. I have created

surveillance tools for high risk patients in multiple detention scenarios and several key elements of this process are problematic:¹⁶

- i. The process of emailing thousands of names with relevant information, or even spreadsheets, tables and other documents from over 150 facilities creates an unreliable and error prone system for finding the most vulnerable detainees inside ICE facilities.
- ii. The process identified by ICE is static, meaning that as detained people move from one facility to another, there will be no way for their location to be automatically updated with their high-risk status, requiring labor intensive and error-prone records reviews.
- iii. This approach will not allow for day to day management of the high-risk population by ICE leadership, since there will not be any way to be automatically notified when people are released, become ill for non-COVID-19 reasons, or even to automatically cross check the new COVID-19 cases against this initial batch of hundreds or thousands of emails.
- iv. ICE should create single portal into which every facility can enter data on the detainees who meet CDC criteria for being high-risk. I employed such a portal as Chief Medical Officer of the NYC jail system, and we relied on this before and after the implementation of an electronic medical record as a way to identify high-risk patients and then track them from one facility to another. This type of approach is also essential for ICE to meet its stated obligations regarding re-entry planning for people who are leaving amid the COVID-19 crisis and coordination with local and state public health partners.
- v. The net effect to this cumbersome and inefficient process will be that it will move unacceptably slowly in a fast-changing situation, far fewer detainees with risk factors will actually be released than could have occurred based on policies, and more high-risk patients will be at risk of serious illness and death in ICE detention.

35. The ERO document fails to include vital elements of CDC guidelines on preventing the spread of COVID-19 inside detention settings:

¹⁶ <https://cochs.org/files/health-it-hie/nyc-meaningful-use.pdf>;
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264512394_Data-Driven_Human_Rights_Using_the_Electronic_Health_Record_to_Promote_Human_Rights_in_Jail.

- a. The ERO document fails to mention or provide guidance on key aspects of social distancing including:
 - i. Intake pens
 - ii. Clinical and medication lines
 - iii. Bathroom and shower areas
 - iv. Sally ports
 - v. Staff entry, symptom checking, meal and locker room areas
- b. The ERO document fails to include guidance on the importance of communication with detainees about changes to their daily routine and how they can contribute to risk reduction, both of which are explicitly identified by the CDC guidelines. This is particularly important in a cross-cultural, multi-lingual setting like ICE detention. Simply posting signs is insufficient to communicate with detained people or staff, particularly during a stressful and chaotic situation like an outbreak. My personal experience leading both small and large scale outbreak responses behind bars is that frequent communication, in housing areas and other parts of detention settings where detained people are held, and where staff work, is critical to delivering important messages about infection control and also hearing about what is working and what isn't.
- c. The ERO document fails to include many critical aspects of cleaning and disinfection outlined in CDC guidelines including:
 - i. CDC guidelines identify a higher level of cleaning and disinfection after a person has been identified as a suspected COVID-19 case. This common sense approach is critical to ensuring that the most high-risk scenarios encountered by detainees and staff alike are responded to appropriately.
 - ii. The ERO document only mentions cleaning of vehicles after transport of a known/suspected case but fails to mention anything about the housing area, cell, bunk or personal effects of detainees, or the computer, equipment or other belongings of staff.
 - iii. CDC guidelines indicate that in settings where people are held overnight, response to a known or suspected COVID-19 case should include closing off areas used by the person who is sick, opening outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area and

waiting 24 hours (or as long as possible) before cleaning/disinfecting.

- iv. The ERO document fails to establish what PPE should be utilized by staff or detainees cleaning areas occupied by a known or suspected COVID-19 case.
- d. CDC guidelines clearly recommend against transfer of detainees between facilities, as a means to prevent the regional spread of COVID-19. This approach is only mandated with regard to non-ICE detainees by the April 10 ERO document, leaving transfers of people in custody of ICE unrestricted.
- e. The ERO document requires that everyone in facilities engage in hand washing for 20 seconds with soap and water but fails to address how this can be accomplished in facilities that utilize metered faucets that make this process essentially impossible.
- f. The ERO document fails to establish or mandate a respiratory protection program, a critical guideline of the CDC: **“If not already in place, employers operating within the facility should establish a respiratory protection program as appropriate, to ensure that staff and incarcerated/detained persons are fit tested for any respiratory protection they will need within the scope of their responsibilities.”** Simply giving out N95 or other masks to staff and detainees and failing to train them and identify the high-risk tasks or scenarios they will encounter serves only to decrease the overall effectiveness of infection control and increase the risk of serious illness and death in ICE facilities. The ERO document gives some details about cloth masks, but there is no mention of any plan to train, record or supervise members of the respiratory protection team, despite the CDC clearly including security personnel in this team.¹⁷

36. The ERO document fails to address the re-entry needs of people leaving ICE custody. This is a critical failure given their ongoing docket review. The CDC makes clear recommendations on this process:

- a. If an individual does not clear the screening process, follow the protocol for a suspected COVID-19 case¹⁸ – including putting a face mask on the individual,

¹⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/hospresptoolkit/programeval.html>. CDC definition of healthcare personnel includes “paid and unpaid persons who provide patient care in a healthcare setting or support the delivery of healthcare by providing clerical, dietary, housekeeping, engineering, security, or maintenance services.”

¹⁸ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/guidance-correctional-detention.html#Medicalisolation>.

immediately placing them under medical isolation, and evaluating them for possible COVID-19 testing.

- b. If the individual is released before the recommended medical isolation period is complete, discuss release of the individual with state, local, tribal, and/or territorial health departments to ensure safe medical transport and continued shelter and medical care, as part of release planning. Make direct linkages to community resources to ensure proper medical isolation and access to medical care.
- c. Before releasing an incarcerated/detained individual with COVID-19 symptoms to a community-based facility, such as a homeless shelter, contact the facility's staff to ensure adequate time for them to prepare to continue medical isolation, or contact local public health to explore alternate housing options.

D. Critical Issues the ICE Has Failed to Address Absent Direct CDC Guidance

37. ICE does not have any mechanisms to monitor or promote the health of all people in its charge. This failure is documented in many reports about ICE's inadequate healthcare system, but now poses a grave risk to their survival as ICE struggles to mount a competent response to COVID-19 across more than 150 facilities, on behalf of roughly 40,000 detainees and almost as many direct and contract staff. ICE's failure to properly monitor and oversee medical care at its detention centers has been a chronic concern in the health services provided to ICE detainees prior to this outbreak and has been cited as a core failure of ICE in its obligations to establish quality assurance throughout its detention network.¹⁹ There is no indication that ICE can adequately monitor the response across its system to COVID-19. Absent robust and centralized oversight, ICE will not be able to provide a coordinated response informed by on-the-ground data from detention centers. This is in stark contrast to many prison systems across the country that are coordinating their efforts, including with health departments.
38. ICE has no plan or even capacity to provide daily clinical guidance to all of the clinical staff it relies on to care for ICE detainees, whether at ICE-operated facilities or contract facilities. The differing levels of oversight and clinical involvement across the various types of ICE facilities means that ICE is unable to promulgate and support a consistent set of clinical practices for all ICE detainees. This is a core failure because of the new nature of COVID-19 and constantly changing clinical guidance on how to treat patients. Daily briefings with health administrators and medical and nursing leadership should be

¹⁹ <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-02/OIG-19-18-Jan19.pdf>;
<https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-06/OIG-19-47-Jun19.pdf>.

held; both are a core aspect of outbreak management and provide a critical avenue for receiving feedback on real-time conditions inside facilities. ICE has not articulated any plan to ensure that this type of basic communication is in place across its network of detention settings. This guidance should also include uniform recommendations on when and how to transport patients to the hospital. Failure to implement this kind of procedure—particularly in light of the other defects described herein—poses a significant risk to the health and lives of ICE detainees.

39. As ICE determines to release people from detention, they should be afforded symptom screening akin to what is done with staff, but the release of detainees to the community will lower their own risks of infection and will also serve to flatten the overall epidemic curve by decreasing the rate of new infections and the demands on local hospital systems. From a medical and epidemiologic standpoint, people are safer from COVID-19 infection when not detained, and the epidemic curve of COVID-19 on the general community is flattened by having fewer people detained.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the statements above are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signed this 28th day of April, 2020 in Port Washington, NY.



Homer Venters

EXHIBIT D

Sponsor Documents

EXHIBIT E

Medical Documents