

March 1, 2026

Re: Congress must Prioritize Care, Access, Representation and Basic Dignity, not Violence and Detention

Dear Members of Congress,

On behalf of the undersigned 70 disability and ally organizations, we urge Congress to consider the immense harm that detention and violent immigration and law enforcement activities have on people with disabilities and those who are Deaf and hard of hearing, our caregivers, teachers, and communities. Funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) activities must be halted until enforcement based on racial profiling and warrantless arrests are stopped, civil rights and due process are protected, and accountability is ensured via a full congressional investigation.¹ Sensitive locations policies must be reinstated so that we can access healthcare and education without fear, and family detention and new private detention contracts must be halted. Finally, and crucially, funds previously taken from critical Medicaid and SNAP programs must be redirected back to the people who rely on them.

ICE and CBP's actions in Minnesota and throughout the country are causing significant harm to people with disabilities and our communities. It is more essential than ever to place guardrails on ICE and CBP, and for Congress to exert itself as a co-equal branch of government to stop the funding for the violence we are witnessing daily, ensure DHS's accountability with the law and the Constitution, and redirect critical funds back to the disabled community.

People with Disabilities, Deaf and Hard of Hearing People, and Disabled People of Color Face Increased Risk and Harm from ICE and Law Enforcement

People with disabilities and those who are Deaf and hard of hearing face an increased threat of violence and detention from ICE and CBP, and disabled people of color face a higher risk of violence from law enforcement across the board.² The targeting of disabled and autistic individuals by agents has resulted in widespread concern and panic within our community.

Disabled US citizens like Aliya Rahman³ and disabled immigrants have been dragged from their cars, chased and brutalized while attempting to obtain medical care, running errands or at their work places. Aliya Rahman explained that she needed accommodations to understand what was happening when ICE dragged her from her vehicle, but was given conflicting instructions and detained. Disabled people are encouraged to disclose their disabilities to law enforcement, specifically individuals whose behavior might be incorrectly seen as noncompliance. Rahman chose to disclose her status though she was

in no way noncompliant. Despite her attempt to do so, Rahman was detained, mistreated, and unable to access the medical care she was seeking.

Javier Diaz Santana, a Deaf man who relies on signed communication, was chased, cuffed and sent to a detention center when his work place was raided. The ICE agents did not allow Santana use of his hands to communicate with sign language to ask or answer questions.⁴

Just last week Nurul Amin Shah Alam, a 56-year-old Rohingya refugee from Burma, was dropped off by immigration agents in Buffalo, New York on the other side of town from his home and was found dead on a nearby street. Shah Alam was nearly blind, spoke no English and had no phone. His family was not notified of his release.⁵

Agents need to be held legally and morally accountable for not adequately addressing the accessibility needs of people with disabilities. Agents refusing to remove their masks make it impossible for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing to read lips. Communication barriers in interactions with ICE and CBP agents violate existing civil rights laws requiring accommodations in law enforcement interactions. Interactions between people with disabilities and law enforcement are often deadly. If ICE and CBP continue their aggressive, confrontational approach it will lead to additional loss of life.

Disabled, Deaf and hard of hearing children are also being directly impacted by ICE and CBP's actions. Local reporting in Minneapolis has found that parents are concerned about their children encountering agents.⁶ The threat of ICE and CBP activities at sensitive locations such as schools and medical facilities has led parents to keep their children out of school and missing necessary therapy and medical appointments. Disabled children must be able to access the resources they need to flourish within the community. Many of these resources are now at risk, including special education programs.

Detention and targeted violence from ICE and other law enforcement is traumatic and can also leave a lasting negative impact on those who experience it. People with disabilities have been refused life-saving medication, leading to long lasting damage, and detention can lead to and exacerbate physical and mental health disabilities. Thus far, it has been reported that at least three individuals with a range of disabilities have died while in detention centers.⁷ Anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder are commonly reported both during and following detention.⁸ People with preexisting mental health disabilities have been documented as having a worsening of their disabilities after detention due to the additional trauma, isolation, and medical and health neglect that is commonly part of the ICE detention experience.⁹ This means that ICE is creating and worsening disabilities through their detention practices.

Disabled and Deaf and Hard of Hearing People's Caregivers, Support Staff and Teachers are Being Detained and Killed

Immigrant Black and brown caregivers, personal care attendants, educational aides, early childhood workers, and caregiving allies are being targeted with dire consequences to both the caregivers and the disabled people who rely on their care.

For example, Veterans Affairs nurse Alex Pretti and special education teacher Linda Davis were both killed by immigration officials' actions. In addition, ICE operations targeting schools have significantly disrupted students' education forcing schools in Minneapolis to move to remote learning and disrupting critical periods in children's education.¹⁰ With constant disruptions to the learning environment, and without professionals such as teachers, therapists, and medical support staff, people with disabilities will fall behind.

On October 28, 2025, 30-year-old Wael Tarabishi's father, Maher Tarabishi, was detained by ICE when he left his routine immigration check-in appointment. Wael, a disabled man with a rare condition, insisted that without his father's caregiving, he would die. After a month in the intensive care unit, Wael passed away on January 23, 2026.¹¹ Adding to the indecency, ICE denied the request for Wael's father to be released to attend his son's funeral. Wael's death can be traced directly to the absence of his father who ICE continues to hold.

Of the millions of direct care workers who provide critical support and care to disabled people, 28% are immigrants. The attacks on immigrant communities further the risk to the home and community-based services 8.4 million older adults and people with disabilities rely on, threatening hundreds of thousands of care jobs and leaving people without critical supports. The cruel actions by ICE and CBP force care workers out of their jobs, threatening the fragile care system people with disabilities need to live.

ICE and CBP Are Funded Through Critical Medicaid and SNAP Cuts

The debated FY26 DHS ICE and CBP funding is on top of the unprecedented \$170 billion received through the 2025 reconciliation bill (H.R.1). paid for, in part, by cuts to Medicaid and nutrition assistance.¹² The unprecedented additional funding for ICE and CBP is being used to rapidly purchase and build more detention facilities across the country; detain and deport more immigrants, more quickly; build more border walls and barriers; increase border security, including surveillance technology; and fund more checkpoints, vehicles and CBP agents, and state and local agencies that participate in immigration enforcement. ICE is now utilizing military bases and purchasing warehouses to use as new costly taxpayer-funded detention facilities with reported plans to detain up to 100,000 people at any given time.¹³ Some warehouse plans have recently been cancelled due to community opposition.¹⁴ Disabled advocates have advocated for decades to live in their own homes, outside of institutions. Detention centers are yet another institution that impede disabled peoples', and all peoples', rights and ability to access the resources and care they need to live.

H.R.1 was able to drastically increase funding to ICE and CBP by instituting policies and cutting funding to food nutrition through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid that people with disabilities or who are Deaf and hard of hearing, their families and caregivers need to survive.^{15,16}

More than 42 million Americans rely on SNAP to be able to afford food, including older adults, people with disabilities, working parents, and caregivers. H.R. 1 slashed SNAP benefits, expanded harsh time limits and work requirements and decreased federal funding while requiring states to administer the changes.¹⁷ State governments will need to make up the difference through their own budgets or implement their own cuts to recipients.

Medicaid is a critical program for 70 million people funded by Congress and states. 12 million people with disabilities, children, veterans, two-thirds of people living in nursing homes, and people with mental health and substance abuse disorders rely on Medicaid for healthcare, supports and services. Medicaid pays for home and community-based services for people with disabilities so that they can live in, and contribute to their communities instead of living in institutions. H.R.1 cut the federal share that states rely on, which will ultimately lead to cuts at the state level; created red tape and new paperwork requirements; instituted work requirements that will likely impact caregivers, people with disabilities, and others.¹⁸ Millions of disabled people, their families and caregivers will unnecessarily lose access to their doctors and services, while increased ICE and CBP violence and detention terrorizes our families and communities.

DHS Must be Held Accountable and Disability & Civil Rights Must be Enforced

Members of Congress sent letters to DHS last August and this February regarding the treatment of disabled people.^{19,20,21} Both letters provide detailed accounts of ICE and CBP agents denying access to medication, assistive devices, and means of communication which violate their rights under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The letters requested a response to questions, including steps the administration will take to protect the rights, health, and lives of people with disabilities. As far as we know, DHS has not responded. Congress must follow up, demand a response, and hold the agency responsible for addressing these continued violations of civil rights.

We believe the only way to adequately protect our community is to implement and enforce measures to hold ICE and CBP agents accountable. ICE and CBP enforcement and detention center funding must cease immediately until meaningful measures including investigation and oversight are adopted. Critical funding taken from Medicaid and SNAP must be restored to the communities that need them.

We call on Congress to:

- Stop immigration enforcement based on racial profiling, warrantless arrests,

and ensure accountability for abuses by federal officers and end qualified immunity to protect the ability of all of us to access the services and care that we need;

- Codify the longstanding sensitive locations policy through the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act so that older adults, people with disabilities, direct care workers, child care workers, and their families have protections in the places they access health care and vital services every day;
- Repeal the immigration enforcement funding provisions in H.R. 1, halt additional appropriations to DHS ICE and CBP activities until there is a full Congressional investigation into the use of force by immigration officials and the deaths of those killed by DHS, and redirect funds to health care, housing, nutrition and other services;
- Restore access to Medicare, Medicaid, ACA subsidies, and SNAP for lawfully present immigrants; and
- Stop family detention, halt any new contracts for private contractors, and add meaningful and enforceable measures that rein in federal agents and require compliance with the Constitution, civil rights laws, and due process as a condition of any funding.

Pouring more money into ICE and CBP harms immigrants and families, including those with disabilities, those who are Deaf and hard of hearing and caregivers. Congress should fund care, access, representation and basic dignity, not abusive detention and violence in our streets.

Sincerely,

Access Central Coast

Access Living

Access Mob Pittsburgh

Access Ready

Action Together NEPA

Alliance for a Just Society

American Association of People with Disabilities

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Association for Community Living in Boulder & Broomfield Counties

Autistic People of Color Fund

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network

California PACE Association

Caring Across Generations

Center for Independence of Individuals with Disabilities
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Public Representation
Citizen Action of WI
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
Coalition on Human Needs
CommunicationFIRST
Community Access Center
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Region
Dayle McIntosh Center for the Disabled
DC Jobs With Justice
Deaf Equality
Disability Rights California
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Disabled in Action PA
Disabled Nurse National Solidarity Collective
DMV Disability and Senior Community
Employment Resources Inc
Foundations for Divergent Minds
Friends Outside
Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network
Hands United
Independent Living Resource Center San Francisco
Just Solutions
Justice in Aging
Keystone Progress Education Fund
Little Lobbyists
Marin Center for Independent Living
Mississippi Reproductive Freedom Fund
Mpact Global
National Action Network
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association (NAAPIMHA)
National Council on Independent Living
National Domestic Workers Alliance & Care in Action
National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA)
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Respite Coalition

New Disabled South
Pennsylvania Alliance for Retired Americans
Popular Democracy
Rolling Start, Inc.
SEIU
Self-Advocates of Michigan
Service Center for Independent Life (SCIL)
TASH
TDIforAccess
The Advocacy Institute
The Children's Partnership
The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies
Transcanwork
UDW/AFSCME Local 3930
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ
UNSEEN Documentary
Voices of Health Care Action

¹ This letter calls for a halting of DHS funding for ICE and CBP activities only. Congress and the administration should use available funds and measures to ensure DHS programs such as FEMA, TSA and the Coast Guard remain operational. See a letter from 93 organizations supporting disaster survivors urging Congress to not use FEMA as political leverage in broader fights over DHS funding.

<https://nlihc.quorum.us/campaign/155000/>

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³ In Focus (February 5, 2026). *I'm autistic and have a brain injury. ICE dragged me from my car anyway. Then my nightmare really began*. The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/ice-aliya-rahman-minneapolis-autism-b2912407.html>

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⁵ Shoemaker, J. Dale (February 25, 2026). *Blind refugee abandoned by Border Patrol is dead*. InvestigativePost. <https://www.investigativepost.org/2026/02/25/blind-refugee-abandoned-by-border-patrol-is-dead/>

⁶ Napolitano, J. (2026, January 23). *Children with disabilities particularly vulnerable to Minneapolis ICE crackdown*. The 74. <https://www.the74million.org/article/children-with-disabilities-particularly-vulnerable-to-minneapolis-ice-crackdown/>

⁷ Singh, M. (2026, January 4). *2025 was Ice's deadliest year in two decades. Here are the 32 people who died in custody*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2026/jan/04/ice-2025-deaths-timeline>

⁸ Bakely, L., Correa-Salazar, C., Gómez, M.G.R., González-Fagoaga, J.E., González, A.A.A., Parrado, E.A., ... Martinez-Donate, A.P. (2023). *Exploring the Association Between Detention Conditions, Detention-Related*

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¹⁰ Lonas Cochran, L. (2026, January 22). *As Minneapolis grapples with ice, schools try to balance learning with student safety*. The Hill. <https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5699002-ice-minneapolis-schools-renee-good-trump-immigration-dhs/>

¹¹ Ruby, Emma (January 27, 2026). *'ICE Killed Him': Arlington Family Asks ICE to Release Detained Father for Son's Funeral*. Dallas Observer. <https://www.dallasobserver.com/news/arlington-son-of-man-detained-by-ice-dies-family-requests-release-40638766/>

¹² Guide (September 16, 2025). *New Funding Increases Immigration Enforcement*. National Immigration Law Center (NILC). <https://www.nilc.org/resources/new-funding-increases-immigration-enforcement/>

¹³ Analysis (December 1, 2025). *Layers of Detention: ICE Detention Expansion Under Trump 2.0., First in a Three Part Series*. Detention Watch Network. <https://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/resources/analysis/2025/layers-detention-ice-detention-expansion-under-trump-20>

¹⁴ Press Release (February 18, 2026). *Local communities are taking on ICE - And They are Winning*. Detention Watch Network. <https://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/pressroom/releases/2026/local-communities-are-taking-on-ice-they-are-winning>

¹⁵ Webinar (October 30, 2025). *Impact of OBBBA on People with Disabilities*. National Health Law Program. <https://healthlaw.org/resource/webinar-the-impact-of-obbba-on-people-with-disabilities/>

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²⁰ Press Release (February 5, 2026). *Brownley, Dingell, Chu Lead Colleagues in Challenging Ice's Treatment of Individuals with Disabilities*. <https://juliabrownley.house.gov/brownley-dingell-chu-lead-colleagues-in-challenging-ices-treatment-of-individuals-with-disabilities/>

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