



CITY OF SAINT PAUL

Mayor Melvin Carter

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March 26, 2020

Jeff Field, Assistant Field Office Director
Jim Stolley, Office of Principal Legal Advisor
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
1 Federal Drive
Ft. Snelling, MN 55111

Dear Assistant Director Field & Mr. Stolley:

As the Mayor of Saint Paul, I am writing to request that ICE release detained individuals with only civil immigration violations, and individuals who are at high risk because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am concerned that the continued detention of these individuals will place these individuals at high risk of contracting COVID-19 as well as spreading the virus to the general population.

The county jails in Minnesota where ICE detains individuals are not environments conducive to practicing social distancing and limiting large gatherings. They are just the opposite. Local ICE detention facilities are crowded, and large numbers of detainees are forced into close contact with each other. People in detention are therefore highly vulnerable to outbreaks of contagious illness and disease. Without the active engagement of the prison administration, people in detention are unable to inform themselves about preventative measures. Even if they have the knowledge to care for themselves, their detention impedes and prevents their ability to take self-care action. Therefore, these facilities are environments where individuals will be unable to prevent the rapid spread of the virus and the continued detention of large numbers of individuals is a serious threat to the health and life of detained individuals.

Also, a large outbreak at one of the ICE detention facilities would create a major threat to the general public similar to the threat created in the Life Care Center in Kirkland, Washington where 50% of the residents have tested positive for the virus, over 20% have died and the outbreak there was a contributing factor to the spread of the virus in the state. Such an outbreak would severely strain Minnesota's healthcare system.

Because I am gravely concerned that ICE does not have the ability or the resources to control a virus outbreak within their detention facilities, I call upon ICE to take sensible and necessary action. I ask that ICE release/not detain individuals with only civil immigration violations as well as release all individuals in high risk categories such as people 60 and over, women who are pregnant, and people with chronic illnesses, compromised immune systems, or disabilities. Releasing these individuals will significantly decrease the number of people in detention and will limit the chances that detained individuals will become ill and spread the virus to the general population.

In addition to releasing high risk individuals, I ask that ICE take action to prevent transmission among those people who remain in custody. ICE needs to immediately test detainees who exhibit any symptoms and/or present risk factors. Delayed testing and confirmation of the illness will be too late to prevent transmission. ICE must also provide proper hygienic supplies at all detention and check-in facilities and must halt transfers from facility-to-facility and to out-of-state locations to prevent the spread of the virus throughout individual states and the United States.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MELVIN CARTER".

Melvin Carter
Mayor

cc: Deputy Mayor Jaime Tincher
Lyndsey Olson, City Attorney
Edmundo Lijo, Assistant City Attorney
Rick Schute, Emergency Management Director
Chief Butch Inks, Emergency Operations Center