

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
*Chairwoman, Committee on the Judiciary,
Subcommittee on Immigration and
Citizenship*

The Honorable Alex Padilla
*Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship,
and Border Safety*

The Honorable Tom McClintock
*Ranking Member, Committee on the
Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration
and Citizenship*

The Honorable John Cornyn
*Ranking Member, Committee on the
Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration,
Citizenship, and Border Safety*

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
*Chairman, Committee on Homeland
Security*

The Honorable Gary Peters
*Chairman, Committee on Homeland
Security and Government Affairs*

The Honorable John Katko
*Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland
Security*

The Honorable Rob Portman
*Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland
Security and Government Affairs*

The Honorable Nanette Barragan
*Chairwoman, Committee on Homeland
Security, Subcommittee on Border Security,
Facilitation, and Operations*

The Honorable Clay Higgins
*Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland
Security, Subcommittee on Border Security,
Facilitation, and Operations*

March 31, 2021

Dear Members of Congress,

We are 127 national, state, and local organizations dedicated to human rights, immigrant rights, civil rights, and the health, safety, and well-being of families and communities throughout the U.S. As Congress takes urgently needed steps to restore humanity and fairness to our immigration system, we write in support of the Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act as the legislative vehicle

for addressing the harmful overreach, abusive conditions, and profiteering incentives that characterize our current system of immigration detention. The Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act sets out a vision and framework for reform, shifting the current system towards humane, effective, and fiscally sound strategies that have been demonstrated to work. We urge members of Congress to support this bill and move it forward for markup and a floor vote.

DHS currently operates a sprawling network of over 200 detention facilities with the capacity to detain tens of thousands of immigrants and asylum-seekers, including families, caregivers, members of the LGBTI community, pregnant people, and other vulnerable populations. The mass detention of immigrants and asylum-seekers while they await a determination of their immigration case poses a [danger](#) to [the health](#) of individuals in detention, and contravenes the U.S.'s legal and policy commitments with respect to due process, human rights, and racial justice. [Black](#) and brown immigrants make up the overwhelming majority of those detained by ICE. People in detention frequently endure horrific [conditions](#), with [sexual assault](#), [violent abuse](#), and [medical negligence](#) all commonplace. The COVID-19 pandemic has [heightened](#) the dangers of detention, with the illness sweeping through immigration detention facilities and affecting over 10,000 people as of late March 2021. [For-profit detention](#) further fuels human rights abuses, and the vast majority of people in ICE custody are locked up in facilities owned or managed by private prison companies or state, county or local governments.

It is also [unnecessary](#). Community-based programs, which provide greater access to legal counsel and case management, have been highly [successful](#) in providing people with support to navigate their immigration court proceedings. Research by the [American Immigration Council](#) and the [Vera Institute](#) has shown that the overwhelming majority of immigrants who are not detained or who are released from detention attend their immigration court hearings, and virtually all do so when they are represented by counsel. A network of community support for immigrants and asylum-seekers navigating the immigration system [already exists](#) and can easily be expanded.

The Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act addresses the current inhumane system and centers the use of more just and effective community-based programs. The Act ends mandatory detention and restores due process, both by mandating an individualized consideration of each person's case and by correcting the currently backwards burden of proof: the Act requires DHS to demonstrate the need for detention, rather than force the detained person to prove her claim to liberty. The Act also phases out private prison contracts and contracts with local and state jails, and instead charts out a path for utilizing the least restrictive conditions necessary through the development of community-based case management programs operated by culturally competent non-profit organizations. Lastly, when DHS does resort to detention, it sets standards for humane treatment, including a ban on solitary confinement, and strengthens oversight, transparency, and accountability across the system.

The time for Congress to act is now. There are approximately 14,000 people in immigration detention, a significant number, but the lowest number of individuals in detention in many years. The current reduced state of detention proves it was never necessary in the first place. It is time to end the horrors of our current system and the harm it inflicts on people, families, and their

communities. We urge you to support the Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act and thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Adhikaar
Advocate Visitors with Immigrants in Detention (AVID) in the Chihuahuan Desert
AFL-CIO
Al Otro Lado
Aldea - The People's Justice Center
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
America's Voice
Amnesty International USA
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta
Asian Counseling and Referral Service
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)
Bellevue Program for Survivors of Torture
Bend the Arc Jewish Action of Greater Ann Arbor
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Border Kindness
Bridges Faith Initiative
CASA
Casa Ruby
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for Victims of Torture
Center of Excellence for Immigrant Child Health and Wellbeing, UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals
Centro Legal de la Raza
Church Council of Greater Seattle
Church World Service
Cleveland Jobs with Justice
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Columbia Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic
Community Change Action
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Corazon Latino
Detention Watch Network
Dignity Rights International
Equality California
Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)
Farmworker Justice

Federal Defenders of San Diego
First Focus Campaign for Children
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
Free Migration Project
Freedom for Immigrants
Futures Without Violence
Georgetown University Law Center International Migrants Bill of Rights (Student Organization)
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Harvard Law School Immigration Project
HIAS
Hispanic Federation
Hope Border Institute
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Action Alliance
Immigrant Advocate Group
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Immigrant Legal Defense
Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)
Immigration Equality Action Fund
Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants
Japanese American Citizens League
Jewish Center for Justice
Justice for Migrant Families WNY
Kino Border Initiative
Las Americas Immigration Advocacy Center
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Legal Aid Justice Center
Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention
Make the Road New York
Make the Road NJ
Mano Amiga
Mariposa Legal
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
Migrant Center for Human Rights
Minnesota Interfaith Coalition on Immigration
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
National Network of Arab American Communities (NNAAC)

National Organization for Women
National Partnership for New Americans
NETWORK Lobby on Social Justice
New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
New Sanctuary Coalition
New York Immigration Coalition
Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
Ohio Immigrant Alliance
OneAmerica
Oxfam America
Partnerships for Trauma Recovery
PFLAG National
Poder Latinx
Project Blueprint
Project Lifeline
Public Counsel
Public Defenders Coalition for Immigrant Justice
RAICES
Refugee Action Network
RefugeeOne
Refugees International
Sanctuary DMV
Save the Children Action Network
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Silver State Equality-Nevada
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southeast Immigrant Rights Network
SPLC Action Fund
Tahirih Justice Center
The Advocates for Human Rights
Transgender Law Center
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
UnLocal
Washington Defender Association
Wilco Justice Alliance (Williamson County, TX)
Women's Refugee Commission
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights