United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 5, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
300 7th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable David Venturella
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

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

Dear Secretary Mullin and Acting Director Venturella and Inspector General Cuffari,

On September 29, 2026, Maryland resident Julian Curo-Churata died in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody. His death is unacceptable and both his family and the American people deserve answers as to how this could occur on your watch – including a full, independent investigation. To make matters worse, there is now an apparent attempt to retaliate against Mr. Curo-Churata's wife, Veronica Ramirez, who received a Notice to Appear dated three days after speaking out in the Washington Post about her husband's death as she sought justice and accountability. [1][2]

Julian Curo-Churata lived with Ms. Ramirez and their two children in Laurel, Maryland. On June 27, less than a week after he had attended a court hearing on his pending immigration case, he was arrested by ICE as he stopped at Home Depot on his way to work. Mr. Curo-Churata was detained at Richwood Correctional Center, an ICE detention facility in Louisiana operated by a private company, until September 28, when he was taken to the hospital after he was found to be in medical distress. The next morning, Mr. Curo-Churata died in the hospital due to cardiac arrest linked to septic shock.[3] He was the 37th person to die in ICE custody in the past year. Johns Hopkins Medicine describes sepsis as a "life-threatening emergency that needs to be treated right away" by medical personnel in a hospital. [4]

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[1] The Washington Post, "A Maryland woman's husband died in ICE custody. She wants answers." October 20, 2026. https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2026/10/20/maryland-woman-husband-died-suddenly-ice-custody-she-wants-answers/

[2] The Washington Post, "She spoke about her husband's ICE custody death. Now she could face deportation," October 30, 2026. https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2026/10/30/she-spoke-about-her-husbands-ice-custody-death-now-she-could-face-deportation/

[3] The Baltimore Sun, "Cause of death for Maryland father who died in ICE custody revealed," October 21, 2026. https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/news/cause-of-death-for-maryland-father-who-died-in-ice-custody-revealed/ar-AA2fLjfv?ocid=BingNewsSerp

[4] Johns Hopkins Medicine, "Health: Septicemia." https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/septicemia

In accordance with national detention standards, ICE is required to provide a safe and humane detention environment for its detainees. However, since the beginning of the second Trump Administration, at least 57 people have died in ICE custody.[5] According to a Human Rights Watch report, the mortality rate of deaths in ICE custody is at its highest level in over a decade, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.[6] Public reporting on ICE facilities has consistently revealed inhumane detention conditions and evidence of inadequate and delayed care. It is clear that ICE is not upholding its duty. ICE maintains that it is "committed to ensuring that all those in custody reside in safe, secure and humane environments," that "comprehensive medical care is provided from the moment individuals arrive and throughout their stay," and that "at no time during detention is a [detainee] denied emergency care."[7] The death of Mr. Curo-Churata, as well as the public record on detention conditions during the second Trump Administration, contradict those claims.

In Mr. Curo-Churata's case, ICE claims that "while in custody, Curo received proper medical care." However, the facility's correctional officers reportedly attested that he had been "lethargic and unresponsive throughout the day" on September 28, but he was not transported to the hospital until late that evening.[8] While ICE claimed he was transported to the hospital at 8:14 p.m.,[9] hospital records reportedly show he did not arrive until 10:26 p.m., even though the hospital was just a 7-minute drive from the facility.[10] Mr. Curo-Churata passed away at 4:01 a.m. on September 29 from cardiac arrest due to septic shock.

Just over a month later, after speaking publicly about the death of her husband, Mr. Curo-Churata's wife, Veronica Ramirez, received a Notice to Appear from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), indicating the Department's intent to remove her from the United States.[11] The timing of this notice is highly suspicious, seeming to come in retaliation for her decision to speak out. It was issued just three days after Ms. Ramirez was quoted extensively in the Washington Post about her husband's death. DHS has already taken one parent away from their children permanently, and now, in their time of grief, threatens to deport the other.

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[5] U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "Detainee Death Reporting." https://www.ice.gov/detain/detainee-death-reporting

[6] Human Rights Watch, "Dying in Detention: Rising Deaths in an Expanding US Immigration Detention System," June 25, 2026. https://www.hrw.org/report/2026/06/25/dying-in-detention/rising-deaths-in-an-expanding-us-immigration-detention-system

[7] U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "Illegal alien from Peru passes away in ICE custody in Louisiana," October 1, 2026. https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/illegal-alien-peru-passes-away-ice-custody-louisiana

[8] The Washington Post, "A Maryland woman's husband died in ICE custody. She wants answers." October 20, 2026. https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2026/10/20/maryland-woman-husband-died-suddenly-ice-custody-she-wants-answers/

[9] U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "Illegal alien from Peru passes away in ICE custody in Louisiana," October 1, 2026. https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/illegal-alien-peru-passes-away-ice-custody-louisiana

[10] The Washington Post, "A Maryland woman's husband died in ICE custody. She wants answers." October 20, 2026. https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2026/10/20/maryland-woman-husband-died-suddenly-ice-custody-she-wants-answers/

[11] The Washington Post, "She spoke about her husband's ICE custody death. Now she could face deportation," October 30, 2026. https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2026/10/30/she-spoke-about-her-husbands-ice-custody-death-now-she-could-face-deportation/

Given these concerns, I'm seeking the release and preservation of all records related to the death of Mr. Curo-Churata, as well as a full, independent investigation into his death. Additionally, please respond to the following questions no later than November 16, 2026.

1. Please identify every camera that recorded Mr. Curo-Churata between September 27 and September 29, 2026. That includes but is not limited to housing-unit, medical-unit, hallway, sally-port and parking-area surveillance cameras; body-worn cameras worn by escort and transport officers; and any camera inside the transport vehicle. For each, state the normal retention period and whether the footage has been kept. If any footage has been deleted or overwritten, explain when, why, and on whose authority.

2. When and how did any Richwood staff first receive information that Mr. Curo-Churata was ill or in medical distress on September 28? Please identify every staff member involved and give exact times.

3. Please provide a minute-by-minute timeline from the first report of Mr. Curo-Churata's medical distress to his arrival at Ochsner LSU Health Monroe Medical Center. Please include:
    a. when medical staff were called and when they arrived;
    b. what assessment and treatment were given on site;
    c. when the decision to send him to the hospital was made;
    d. when the vehicle left Richwood; and
    e. when it arrived at the hospital.

4. Who decided to have Mr. Curo-Churata taken to the hospital by facility staff instead of an ambulance?
    a. Did anyone call 911 or EMS at any point, and was any such call canceled?
    b. Did facility or ICE policy, cost, staffing, or the need for ICE approval play any part in the decision?

5. What was the basis for ICE's statement to the press that facility staff transported Mr. Curo-Churata to Ochsner LSU Health Monroe Medical Center at 8:14 p.m. CDT? Please identify any documents indicating that a transfer to the hospital was ordered, requested, or occurred at or around 8:14 p.m. CDT.

6. Please describe Mr. Curo-Churata's transport to the hospital, including:
    a. the type of vehicle and whether it had any medical equipment, such as oxygen, an AED, or a stretcher;
    b. the names and positions of the officers in the vehicle;
    c. whether any medical staff rode with him;
    d. whether he was restrained during transport, and if so, how;
    e. whether anyone monitored his condition or gave care during the drive;
    f. whether the hospital was told before arrival that a patient in medical distress was coming.

7. Please provide LaSalle Management Company and/or Richwood's written policies, and the provisions of its ICE contract and the detention standards that apply, governing:
    a. medical emergencies;
    b. when EMS must be called;
    c. transport of detainees to outside hospitals.

8. When did LaSalle Management Company and/or Richwood notify ICE of his medical emergency, his transport, his admission to the hospital, and his death?

9. What internal reviews, mortality reviews, or after-action reports has LaSalle Management Company and/or Richwood started or completed regarding Mr. Curo-Churata's death? Has the facility given records to the DHS Office of Inspector General, the ICE Health Service Corps, or any medical examiner or coroner? Please provide any findings.

10. When, if ever, has Ms. Veronica Ramirez been issued a Notice to Appear before the one she recently received?
    a. What was the reason that she received the Notice to Appear at this time?
    b. Who made the decision to issue her a Notice to Appear?

Sincerely,

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator