

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2026

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

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

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Director Lyons,

As members of Maryland's Congressional Delegation, we write in strong opposition to the effort by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to convert a large, industrial warehouse at 10900 Hopewell Road, Williamsport, Maryland into an immigration detention facility. We are deeply concerned about the negative impact this facility may have on Washington County and the State of Maryland. Your lack of any substantive response to our multiple inquiries surrounding the facility is unacceptable and flouts Congressional oversight authority, and the lack of regard for community input around this proposal is a disservice to the people you purport to serve.

On February 27th, DHS published an "Early Notice and Public Review of a Proposed Activity in a 100- to 500-Year Floodplain," with its proposal to acquire and retrofit the warehouse on Hopewell Road. This notice, made six weeks after DHS had already purchased the building, raises more questions than it answers about DHS and ICE's facility needs.

DHS appears to be attempting to execute its plan to convert this warehouse into an immigration detention facility with as little transparency as possible. For example, DHS did not notify the county where the warehouse is located about its plans until just days before its purchase.¹² The State of Maryland has also filed a lawsuit arguing that DHS did not engage in the required environmental review process, nor did it provide any justification for not doing so.³ And with this notice, DHS has allotted just one week for the public to submit comments about this troubling undertaking, a deadline that should be extended to allow for stakeholder input.

This effort to convert an industrial warehouse into a "Detention Processing Center" for up to 1,500 detainees is an apparent attempt to realize Acting Director Lyons' previously-stated goal

¹ Washington County Statement on U.S. Department of Homeland Security Notice Concerning Proposed ICE Facility, January 28, 2026. <https://www.washco-md.net/news/washington-county-statement-on-u-s-department-of-homeland-security-notice-concerning-proposed-ice-facility/>

² WYPR, "DHS buys warehouse in Maryland to possibly hold detained immigrants," January 27, 2026. <https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2026-01-27/dhs-buys-warehouse-in-maryland-to-possibly-hold-detained-immigrants>

³ Attorney General of Maryland, "Attorney General Brown Files Lawsuit to Stop Construction of Unlawful ICE Detention Facility in Washington County," February 23, 2026. <https://oag.maryland.gov/News/pages/Attorney-General-Brown-Files-Lawsuit-to-Stop-Construction-of-Unlawful-ICE-Detention-Facility-in-Washington-County.aspx>

of transforming the deportation process into “[Amazon] Prime, but with human beings.”⁴ However, people are not packages. Every individual in the United States has guaranteed constitutional rights, including the Fifth Amendment right to due process and the Eighth Amendment right to be protected from inhumane treatment.

The warehouse DHS seeks to convert into a detention facility is a commercial property. It is neither designed nor outfitted to house, feed, or provide adequate care for detainees. Retrofitting such a building into a detention facility is a dramatic departure from its original design and intended purpose and raises questions as to how DHS and ICE will be able to humanely care for detainees and how the facility will impact the local community. For example, DHS’s proposal notes that upgrades may be necessary to wastewater infrastructure but does not articulate a plan or timeline for those changes and simply asserts, without evidence, that the municipal system can handle all future needs. As the State points out in its lawsuit, the average wastewater flow for an industrial warehouse is a fraction of the necessary capacity for a 1,500-person facility, and overwhelming the existing capacity could result in sewage overflows.⁵ There is no evidence that DHS and ICE have discussed their needs or permitting plans with municipal authorities.

ICE operations have already inflicted distinct harm upon Maryland residents and communities resulting in chaos, confusion, and violence. Currently, ICE operates temporary holding rooms at its Baltimore Field Office, where there have been consistent, credible reports of inhumane conditions, including that detainees have routinely been denied access to medical care and medication, basic hygiene products, timely communication with legal counsel and families, and even denied food.

In a response to a January 20, 2026 letter from our delegation regarding DHS and ICE plans to convert this warehouse into a detention facility, Secretary Noem claimed that the operation of such a facility would be maintained at the “same high standard of care” as other ICE detention facilities, which DHS is able to achieve in part due to a “robust and multilevel oversight and compliance program.”⁶ Unfortunately, and with grave consequences, DHS has gutted key oversight offices within the Department, including the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and the Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman, after an attempt to shut them down entirely faced significant pushback.⁷ In fact, a report by a government watchdog found that ICE detention facility inspections dropped by more than one-third in 2025.⁸ In light of this, it comes

⁴ Oklahoma Voice, “ICE director envisions Amazon-like mass deportation system: ‘Prime, but with human beings,’” April 10, 2025. <https://oklahomavoice.com/2025/04/10/ice-director-envisions-amazon-like-mass-deportation-system-prime-but-with-human-beings/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWe%20need%20to%20get%20better%20at%20treating%20this,process%20%E2%80%9Clike%20%28Amazon%29%20Prime%2C%20but%20with%20human%20beings.%E2%80%9D>

⁵ State of Maryland v. Noem, 1:26-cv-00733, (D. Maryland Feb 23, 2026) ECF No. 1

⁶ Letter from Department of Homeland Security to members of Maryland’s Congressional Delegation, February 13, 2026.

⁷ Federal News Network, “DHS plans for skinny staffs at civil liberties, oversight offices,” May 26, 2025. <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/workforce/2025/05/dhs-plans-for-skinny-staffs-at-civil-liberties-oversight-offices/>

⁸ Project on Government Oversight, “ICE Inspections Plummeted as Detentions Soared in 2025,” January 12, 2026. https://www.pogo.org/investigates/ice-inspections-plummeted-as-detentions-soared-in-2025?utm_source=chatgpt.com

as little surprise that there have since been multiple reports that have found violations of not just the national detention standards but also human rights in ICE facilities.⁹¹⁰ DHS also experienced its deadliest year in more than two decades as 32 people died in ICE custody in 2025.¹²

DHS and ICE are dramatically expanding detention capacity because you are not targeting the “worst of the worst” as claimed but rather are engaged in a dragnet operation that has overwhelmingly caught people who pose no threat to public safety. An internal DHS document reportedly exposed that more than 86% of the nearly 400,000 noncitizens arrested by ICE in the first year of this Administration did not have charges or convictions for violent crimes.¹³ Reviews of ICE’s own data revealed that during the first nine months of this Administration, more than half of the people ICE arrested in Maryland had no criminal convictions or charges, and only 10% were violent criminals.¹⁴¹⁵

This effort to establish a massive detention facility in Maryland is poorly-planned, goes against the will of our constituents, is unnecessary for a mission that truly targets the “worst of the worst,” and given DHS’s track record in this Administration, is likely to violate the constitutional and human rights of detainees. We urge you to immediately and completely halt DHS’s plans to establish a detention facility in Maryland.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

⁹ Senator Jon Ossoff, “Over 1,000 Credible Reports of Human Rights Abuses in U.S. Immigration Detention,” January 27, 2026. https://www.ossoff.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/260114_Report_Patterns_v5.pdf

¹⁰ The Washington Post, “60 violations in 50 days: Inside ICE’s giant tent facility at Ft. Bliss,” September 16, 2025. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/09/16/ice-detention-center-immigration-violations/>

¹¹ Human Rights Watch, “US: Immigrants Abused in Florida Detention Sites,” July 21, 2025.

https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/07/21/us-immigrants-abused-in-florida-detention-sites?utm_source=chatgpt.com
¹² The Guardian, “2025 was ICE’s deadliest year in two decades. Here are the 32 people who died in custody,” January 4, 2026. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2026/jan/04/ice-2025-deaths-timeline>

¹³ CBS News, “Less than 14% of those arrested by ICE in Trump’s 1st year back in office had violent criminal records, document shows,” February 9, 2026. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ice-arrests-violent-criminal-records-trump-first-year/>

¹⁴ Maryland Matters, “More than 3,300 Marylanders were detained by ICE in 2025, twice the number of preceding years,” January 11, 2026. <https://marylandmatters.org/2026/01/11/more-than-3300-marylanders-were-detained-by-ice-in-2025-twice-the-number-of-preceding-years/>

¹⁵ The Baltimore Banner, “Most immigrants arrested in Maryland crackdowns have no criminal record,” December 17, 2025. <https://www.thebanner.com/politics-power/national-politics/immigration-enforcement-maryland-numbers-ice-arrests-criminal-MKPPI2LGXJDXJD3RHC2FNNR2AE/>



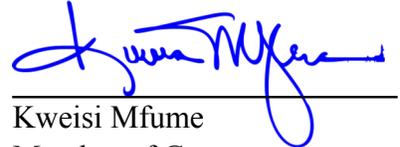
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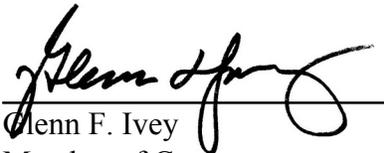
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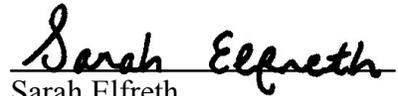
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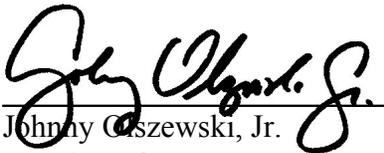
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