April 7, 2016

Marilyn Rodriguez

BSW/MSW Social Work Student

Loyola University Chicago

820 N. Michigan Ave.

Chicago, IL 60611

Danny K. Davis

Chicago Office

2746 West Madison Street

Chicago, Illinois 60612

Dear Representative Davis:

As an MSW Social Work student at Loyola University Chicago, I want to bring to your attention an injustice faced by immigrants detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that are then deported to different countries. When immigrants are in ICE custody: the cash they were carrying, the money their family sent them, or money earned for detention center labor, is returned in forms that are difficult or impossible to use in the country they are deported to. Immigrant’s money is returned in forms of a personal check or a prepaid debit card, both that are domestic financial instruments. Therefore, cannot be used internationally, leaving immigrants unable to claim their money. Immigrants would not be facing this injustice if instead their money were returned in cash.

Therefore, I urge you to look into the possibility of developing a system where ICE and ERO (Enforcement and Removal Operations) ensure that every individual has the opportunity to convert his or her commissary funds to cash before deportation. This change in the system is a way to enact a more reasonable and humane approach to immigration procedures which:

* increases the safety of immigrants by being able to make use of their money
* reduces vulnerability for exploitation and abuse after deportation to another country
* addresses a problem in both the human rights and the economic problems caused by the current immigration system

Sincerely,

Marilyn Rodriguez

BSW/MSW Social Work Student

Loyola University Chicago

820 N. Michigan Ave.

Chicago, IL 60611

Date

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Office Address

United States House of Representatives/Senate

City, State, Zip

Dear Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

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Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Title

Your Address

Your City, State, Zip

April 7, 2016

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky

237 Rayburn House Office Building

United States House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

# Dear Representative Schakowsky:

I am an Illinois resident and Masters in Social Work student at Loyola University Chicago. I appreciate your past support on legislation that addresses the violence immigrant women face and that you have stood up for the justice of individuals who have migrated.

A group of Loyola social work students and I spent some time at the Nogales, Arizona, USA/ Nogales, Sonora, MX to explore the complexities of migration at this time. What we witnessed was both a human rights crisis and systems that have stopped recognizing humanity. We began to recognize that for years border communities and immigrants alike have struggled with increasingly aggressive practices taken by U.S. border enforcement agencies. Vague and insufficient policies on use-of-force make confrontations more likely to escalate, increasing the risks to the life and limb of all involved; poor compliance processes and insufficient informational materials make it difficult for migrants and U.S. residents to report problems, much less see those complaints through the process undercutting their due process and other rights; ports-of-entry are understaffed and under-resourced, creating delays that harm local and international economies; and more. Meanwhile, all of this is exacerbated by border and immigration policy that is made to meet the demands of distant audiences, but which lacks consultation with and accountability to border communities. These factors combine to create border and immigration policy in the U.S. that is at worst ineffective in meeting the national interest and at worst actively harms Americans and their communities. The provisions of this legislation are a move to address these problems, bring border communities more actively into engagement with border and immigration policy and agencies, ensure that all border residents have their rights and dignity respected, and to craft future practices that move this country forward.

I am writing to ask you to continue your responsiveness to immigration issues and support HB3576 that will increase transparency, accountability, and community engagement within U.S. Customs and Border Protection, provide independent oversight of border security activities, improve training for U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents and officers, and for other purposes.

Please reply to me with your plan of support.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Wessels

MSW Social Work Candidate 2017

Loyola University Chicago

6334 N. Lakewood Ave

Chicago, IL 60660

<http://bnhr.org/> <https://www.kinoborderinitiative.org/programs/research-and-advocacy/> Date

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Office Address

United States House of Representatives/Senate

City, State, Zip

# Dear Representative/Senator\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

I am an Illinois resident and a student at Loyola University Chicago. A group of fellow Loyola social work students spent some time at the Nogales, Arizona, USA/ Nogales, Sonora, MX to explore the complexities of migration at this time. What they witnessed was both a human rights crisis and systems that have stopped recognizing humanity. They began to recognize that for years border communities and immigrants alike have struggled with increasingly aggressive practices taken by U.S. border enforcement agencies. Vague and insufficient policies on use-of-force make confrontations more likely to escalate, increasing the risks to the life and limb of all involved; poor compliance processes and insufficient informational materials make it difficult for migrants and U.S. residents to report problems, much less see those complaints through the process undercutting their due process and other rights; ports-of-entry are understaffed and under-resourced, creating delays that harm local and international economies; and more.

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Please reply to me with your plan of support.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Address

City, State, Zip

<http://bnhr.org/> <https://www.kinoborderinitiative.org/programs/research-and-advocacy/> Date

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Office Address

United States House of Representatives/Senate

City, State, Zip

# Dear Representative/Senator\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

Recently, our nation has been drastically increasing the amount of money and resources it spends on the detention of immigrants. As a result of changing immigration policy, the number of immigrants kept in detention centers quadrupled from 6,000 in 1995 to 27,000 in 20071. U.S. Immigrations and Custom Enforcement (ICE) reports that in 2011, it received funding for 33,400 detention beds2, and some argue that this figure serves as a quota3. In order to accommodate the rapid expansion of immigrant detention, ICE has contracted private prisons fitting the “Criminal Alien Requirement” (CAR) to house detainees. Unfortunately, CAR prisons are less regulated than federal institutions, and many human rights violations have been reported as a result. There is an urgent need for our government to reduce its reliance on for-profit prison contractors and reform detention practices.

Numerous incidents and reports reveal that private, for-profit detention centers have continuously failed to meet ICE’s standard of, “providing a safe, secure and humane environment for detainees”2. A prison known as “Tent City”, Willacy, operated by Management and Training Corporation in Texas was temporarily closed in 2011. Each tent comprised 200 people and was described by the American Civil Liberties Union as cramped, dirty, and insect-infested4. Shortly after the closure, the Bureau of Prisons renewed a contract with Willacy, and just last year 2,000 of the inmates revolted5. In addition to maintaining poor living conditions, private detention centers use almost twice as much of their bed space as isolation units when compared to federal prisons4. These stressors and other issues not only aggravate riots but also stem violence between detainees. In 2008, the Idaho Department of Corrections determined that the Idaho Correctional Center, run by the private company Corrections Corporation for America (CCA), had four times more assaults than all of Idaho’s other prisons combined6. It was determined that this issue was related to understaffing at the Idaho Correctional Center. Despite the issues addressed in 2008, in 2013, CCA was held in contempt of court for violating staffing agreements with the American Civil Liberties Union regarding this facility7. Private detention centers have proven themselves incapable of maintaining detainees’ rights and wellbeing.

In light of this information, the American people urge you to continue developing an alternative framework for our nation’s immigration detention policy. Consider proposing legislation that immediately enacts a system-wide review of private, contracted detention centers. End contracts with centers that have records of abuse, and add federal standards of space, staffing, and care to the contracts of withstanding private centers. Call for the removal of quotas from detention policy. Many contracts with private detention centers include occupancy quotas, and this incentivizes excessive and prolonged detention. In addition to removing quotas, call for the redirection of funds from contracted beds and centers to community-supported alternatives to detention programs. I trust your determination to ensure that detained immigrants are heard in legislation and their human rights will no longer be disregarded.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Address

City, State, Zip

[1] Dow, M. (2007). Designed to punish: immigrant detention and deportation. *Social Research, 74(2),* 533-546. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40971943> [2] “Detention Management”. (2011). U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement. Retrieved from <https://www.ice.gov/factsheets/detention-management> [3] Carson, B., and Diaz, E. (2015). Payoff: How Congress ensuresprivate prison profit with an immigrant detention quota. Retrieved from <http://grassrootsleadership.org/sites/default/files/reports/quota_report_final_digital.pdf> [4] Warehoused and forgotten: Immigrants trapped in our shadow private prison system. (2014). American Civil Liberties Union. Retrieved from <https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/060614-aclu-car-reportonline.pdf> [5] Beltran, J., Buch, J., and Cassady, M. (2015). 2,000 inmates riot at south Texas prison: Medical care reportedly the issues. *My San Antonio.* Retrieved from <http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/Officers-working-to-resolve-riot-at-south-Texas-6092832.php> [6] Wofford, T. (2014). The operators of America’s largest immigrant detention center have a history of inmate abuse. *Newsweek.* Retrieved from <http://www.newsweek.com/operators-americas-largest-immigrant-detention-center-have-history-inmate-293632> [7] Huertas, T. (2016). A year after the prison riot, company seeks new contract for ‘tent city’ in Willacy County. *Valley Central.* Retrieved from <http://valleycentral.com/news/local/a-year-after-the-prison-riot-company-seeks-new-contract-for-tent-city-in-willacy-county>

**How to find you Reps/Senators:**

<http://www.naswil.org/advocacy/advocacy-alerts/>

**Other state based legislation to follow:**

*The following states have introduced legislation recently that either aims to protect and support the rights of undocumented immigrants or aims to increase punitive measures. The list is by no means exhaustive but intended to provide a better understanding of the political climate regarding immigration.*

**Arizona**

* House Bill 2024- Courts would be forbidden from awarding legal and attorney fees to any attorney or government that won a case and opposed federal immigration law.
* House Bill 2223- This bill would prohibit any sanctuary policies that prevent law enforcement from obtaining information about immigration status. The attorney general would be responsible for examining any law, policy or procedure that violates this law and funding could be withheld.
* House Bill 2370- Under this bill, state resources could not be used to help refugees, unaccompanied children or non-citizens unless they have undergone a background check and the U.S government agrees to compensate the state.
* House Bill 2451- This bill requires undocumented immigrants who are in prison to serve 85% of their sentence before being released to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This would repeal a previous law that allowed them to serve 50% of their sentence.
* Senate Bill 1377- This bill states that an undocumented immigrant who commits a crime in the United States under certain circumstances must be sentenced to the maximum amount of time and prohibits early release.

**California**

* Senate Bill 1289- This bill is also known as Dignity Not Detention Act. The bill is designed to curb mistreatment of immigrants in detention centers. Under this act, local and county actors would be prohibited from allowing private, for-profit detention centers from operating and ensuring all other centers are operating with humane standards. Often, these facilities operate with very little oversight and human right’s violations have occurred in them.

**Florida**

* House Bill 675- This has been deemed an “anti-sanctuary” bill. It compels local governments and law enforcement to cooperate with federal immigration agents. Public employees must report violations to the attorney general or a state attorney. Agencies can be fined up to $5,000 a day for violations. Officials who passed sanctuary policies could be removed from office and such policies would have to be repealed within 90 days.

**Georgia**

* Senate Bill 269- It recently passed in both the House and Senate and requires cities to affirm that they are complying with Georgia’s immigration laws. It prohibits immigration sanctuary policies by local governments.

**Maine**

* LD 1652- This proposal from Gov. Paul LePage would withhold funding from municipalities that prohibit law enforcement from asking about a person’s immigration status. Under this bill, municipalities would be denied state funding for education and general assistance.

**Virginia**

* Senate Bill 270- This bill prohibits the establishment of sanctuary cities. Policies cannot impede federal law enforcement and violations can result in the loss of state funding. This bill was recently vetoed by the Governor.

**Wisconsin**

* Assembly Bill 450- This bill would prohibit sanctuary cities. More specifically, policies would be banned that prevent police from inquiring about immigration status and communicating with immigration officials.
* Senate Bill 533- This bill prevents the city of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County from issuing state identification cards to undocumented immigrants. Local identification cards would be permitted but must say “Not for Voting” on them. These cards could not be used to apply for public benefits