

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 22, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Nebraska Avenue Complex
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We write to urge the Department of Homeland Security to follow the Department of Justice's recent decision and end the use of privately operated prisons.

In a recent report, the Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General found for-profit prisons to be more costly, less effective and more dangerous than those run by the government.

The Inspector General found private prisons do not provide the same level of safety and security as government run facilities. For-profit immigration detention centers have had similar concerns about safety, with reports finding violations of basic human rights standards. Adults and children detained in private detention facilities often go without due process protections and proper medical care. In fact, the lack of proper medical care in for-profit facilities led to the deaths of several detainees.

The Inspector General's report also found for-profit prisons cost more than facilities run by the government. According to a recent study by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, using for-profit prisons cost on average an additional \$3,000 per prisoner. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement holds 62 percent of the approximately 400,000 people it detains each year in for-profit facilities. Immigration and Customs Enforcement currently spends more than \$2 billion a year detaining individuals.

Community-based alternatives to detention are more humane, cost-effective and provide the necessary resources to ensure undocumented immigrants comply with immigration court proceedings. Individuals in alternatives to detention appear in court 99 percent of the time and comply with removal 84 percent of the time. According to National Immigration Forum, increasing the use of alternatives to detention could save the federal government more than \$1.4 billion a year.

Given the impact on detainees, the high cost to taxpayers and the Department of Justice's recent decision, we believe the Department of Homeland Security can and should immediately begin phasing out for-profit, privately run immigration detention facilities. As each contract comes to the end of its term, the department should either decline to renew the contract or substantially reduce its scope.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senator



Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

CC:

Sarah R. Saldaña

Director

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

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