

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington DC 20530

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington DC 20528

Dear Attorney General William Barr and Acting Secretary Chad Wolf,

We are asking that you **IMMEDIATELY HALT ALL ARRESTS, RELEASE PEOPLE FROM DETENTION CENTERS, AND CLOSE IMMIGRATION COURTS**. In the midst of a global pandemic, ICE is continuing to arrest and detain people for immigration violations. This is extremely dangerous and must end immediately.

In the last 10 days, the Immigrant Defense Project has received at least 13 reports of ICE arrests or sightings in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island, Queens, Suffolk and Westchester County (New Rochelle), the latest at a courthouse this morning in Long Island. One of these arrests occurred early in the morning in New Rochelle, one day before Governor Cuomo announced the state-ordered “containment area” there, as it is the “largest cluster in the country.” This arrest at a multi-family home involved 10 ICE agents claiming to be police. And just yesterday, ICE arrested a man outside of a courthouse in Central Islip, the same day the Suffolk County announced it would close their schools.

ICE is actively continuing their community arrests, and transferring people from areas significantly affected by the virus into detention centers where, allegedly, they have not identified any positive coronavirus cases. This all but guarantees that COVID-19 outbreaks in detention centers are no longer a question of *if*, but *when*. In addition, attorneys have submitted requests to ICE that they release dozens of people who are medically-vulnerable, but ICE has not yet responded. It is critical that ICE release vulnerable individuals (including but not limited to older adults, pregnant women, people with respiratory conditions or who are immunocompromised) with a discharge plan and the minimum 30-day supply of medication required by law. But also, given the impossibility of social distancing, or adequate hygiene and healthcare in the detention centers to address a public health threat of this scale, everyone held in detention centers must be released immediately. ICE has always had complete authority to detain or release people at its discretion. Given that federal, state and local governments are mandating extreme measures to address this global pandemic—the only reasonable action is for ICE to immediately stop all enforcement actions and to exercise its discretion to release ICE detainees now.

Finally, crowded immigration courts must be closed due to the serious public health and safety risks to judges, staff, attorneys, loved ones, and community members attending court. The National Association of Immigration Judges, AFGE Local 511, and American Immigration Lawyers Association all agree that it must be done now. To be clear: the need to imminently halt the detained docket is just another reason why detained people must be released and all ICE arrests must stop. People who are incarcerated by ICE cannot languish without opportunity to

be released. The releasing of immigrants, halting of ICE enforcement, and closing of all immigration courts is a matter of urgent public safety.

Signed,

African Services Committee
Black Alliance for Just Immigration
The Bronx Defenders
Brooklyn Defender Services
Families for Freedom
Immigrant Defense Project
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
The Legal Aid Society
Make the Road New York
New Sanctuary Coalition
New York Civil Liberties Union
New York County Defender Services
New York Immigration Coalition
Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights
Queens Defenders
Sunset Park ICE Watch