

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 14, 2015

Director Sarah Saldaña
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 4706
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Inspector General John Roth
Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528-0305

Dear Director Saldaña, Inspector General Horowitz, and Inspector General Roth:

We are deeply concerned about the treatment of immigration detainees at the Adelanto Detention Center (ADC) operated by GEO Group Inc. in Adelanto, California. In particular, we are concerned by reports indicating that the GEO Group, Inc. is failing to provide adequate medical treatment to detainees in their custody at ADC.

Since the opening of Adelanto in 2011, there have been consistent reports documenting GEO's failure to respond and adequately address the health and mental health concerns of detainees. In 2012, GEO's failure to provide adequate medical care to detainees at Adelanto resulted in the death of at least one detainee, Mr. Fernando Dominguez. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Office of Professional Responsibility determined that Mr. Dominguez's death was caused by "egregious errors" committed by the Center's medical staff, including failure to perform proper physical examinations in response to symptoms and complaints, and failure to facilitate timely and appropriate access to off-site treatment.¹ Ultimately, the Office of Detention Oversight concluded that Mr. Dominguez's death could have been prevented and that he received an unacceptable level of medical care while detained at Adelanto.²

Recently, we learned that Raul Ernesto Morales-Ramos, an individual who was detained for five years, died after GEO failed to diagnose and treat his intestinal cancer.³ We have been told that Mr. Morales-Ramos was taken to the hospital after he experienced "unusual bleeding" and died three days later. While we do not know the specifics of this case, these reports raise

¹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Office of Professional Responsibility Management Inspections and Detention Oversight, Enforcement and Removal Operations, Adelanto Correctional Facility, Sept. 18-20, 2012 available at: http://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/odo-compliance-inspections/adelantoCorrectionalFac_Adelanto-CA-Sept_18-20-2012.pdf

² *Id.*

³ "Salvadoran immigrant held at Adelanto ICE facility dies," *L.A. Times*, April 7, 2015, available at: <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-detainee-death-20150407-story.html>.

significant questions as to whether the Mr. Morales-Ramos' death was due to GEO's failure to diagnose and treat his intestinal cancer.

We have also learned that Gerardo Correlas, a partially paralyzed nineteen-year-old detained at ADC, developed a urinary tract infection after GEO's failure to sanitize catheters. GEO group's medical staff instructed Mr. Corrales to recycle his catheters, a clearly unsanitary practice.⁴ The infection resulted in this young man's hospitalization.

These cases represent troubling and serious concerns regarding the medical care provided by the GEO Group at the Adelanto Detention Center. Sadly, these cases are not isolated incidents. Civil rights groups, including the ACLU of Southern California, have documented extensive complaints by civil rights groups, suggesting evidence of a pattern and practice of substandard care at ADC.

The 2011 ICE Performance Based National Detention Standards (PBNDS) apply to all contract detention facilities, including the Adelanto Detention Center. The standards require immigration detention centers to "ensure that detainees have access to appropriate and necessary medical, dental and mental health care, including emergency services." According to the PBNDS "detainees shall be able to request health services on a daily basis and shall receive timely follow up"; "detainees shall receive continuity of care from the time of admission to time of transfer"; and "detainees with chronic conditions shall receive care and treatment, as needed, that includes monitoring of medications, diagnostic testing and chronic care clinics."

However, reports indicate that these standards are not being followed at ADC. A May 15, 2015, letter from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Southern California, American Immigration Lawyers Association, Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC), and other organizations regularly working with the people detained at Adelanto, detailed a series of troubling medical cases. The following cases were also included in this letter and are examples of substandard medical care at the ADC facility:

- Denial of medical treatment to a detainee with Hepatitis C because "his length of stay was uncertain";
- Denial of medically-necessary headgear for a detainee with severe epilepsy who is prone to violent seizures;
- Denial of treatment to a detainee with a serious hip infection because "it was too expensive" that ultimately developed into a life-threatening condition that required a 6-week hospitalization;
- Failure to perform diagnostic tests on a detainee suffering from extreme headaches, dizziness and temporary losses of vision;
- Denial of meal accommodations and sufficient pain medication for a detainee suffering from a severe form of sickle-cell anemia;
- Denial of surgery to correct mobility issues in a stroke victim's arm;
- Denial of back surgery for a detainee with a slipped disc because "the injury occurred in prison," and his "stay at Adelanto will be brief";

⁴ Affidavit by Christina Fialho, Co-Founder & Executive Director of Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC), *available at* http://chu.house.gov/sites/chu.house.gov/files/documents/Gerardo_Corrales_Affidavit_Fialho.pdf

- Delayed treatment for a detainee with a severe case of valley fever after he had informed medical staff that his condition requires regular monitoring and specialized care.⁵

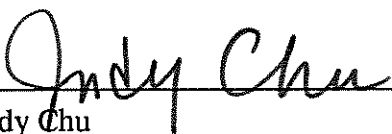
Given this troubling history, we are concerned that ICE has decided to expand the available bed space at ADC by 640 beds (for a total of approximately 1,940). We understand that ICE started this expansion on July 1, 2015, and has initially decided to house women and possibly LGBTQ individuals at the Center. It is unclear why ICE has decided to house these particularly vulnerable populations in a facility with a documented history of medical neglect.

We, therefore, urge you to do the following:

- 1) Immediately halt expansion of the detention population at ADC, particularly plans to transfer or detain women and LGBTQ individuals;
- 2) Appoint an investigator with DOJ's Office of the Inspector General to launch a comprehensive pattern or practice investigation into the delivery of health care at ADC;
- 3) Appoint an investigator with DHS's Office of the Inspector General to inspect and ensure the health and safety of the current and future detainees housed at ADC; and
- 4) Provide a civil rights group such as CIVIC with a pro bono telephone extension at ADC so that the community may expand its ability to document and keep our offices updated on problems witnessed at this remote Center.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to a response. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Judy Chu

Member of Congress




Karen Bass

Member of Congress



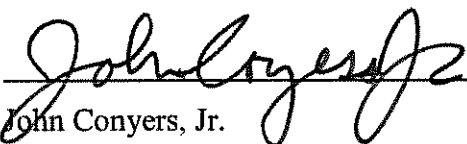
Linda T. Sánchez

Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren

Member of Congress



John Conyers, Jr.

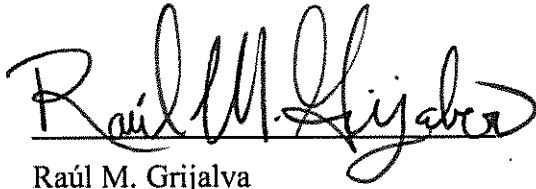
Member of Congress



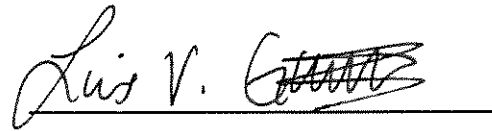
Michael M. Honda

Member of Congress

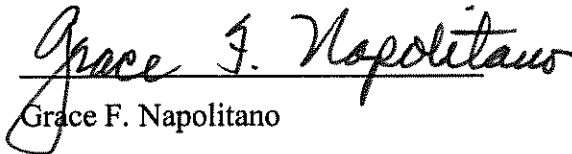
⁵ <https://www.aclusocal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/NGO-letter-re-Adelanto-medical-care.pdf>



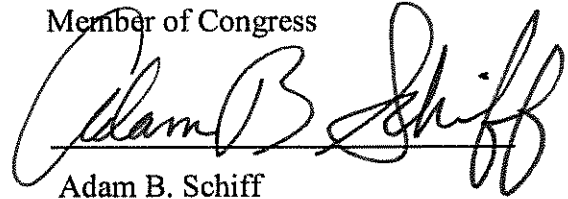
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



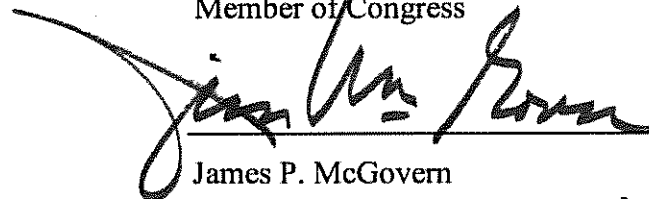
Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



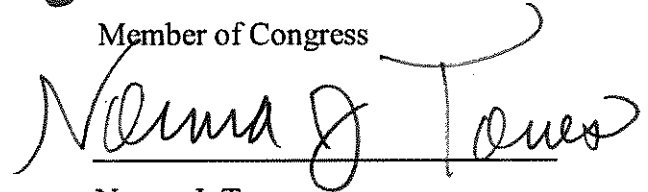
Mark Takano
Member of Congress



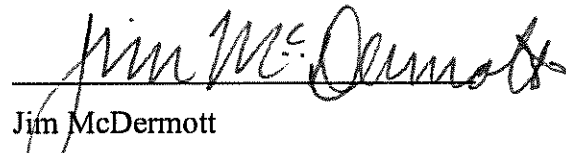
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress



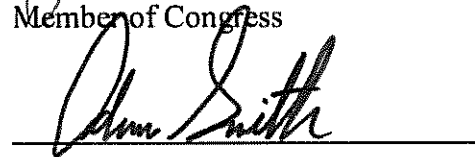
Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



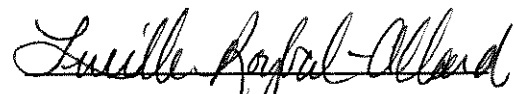
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress




Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



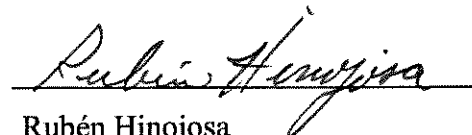
Adam Smith
Member of Congress



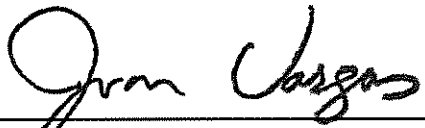
Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

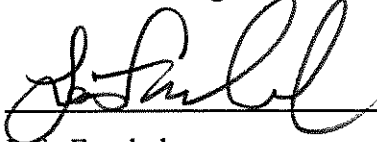


Rubén Hinojosa
Member of Congress



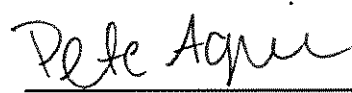
Juan Vargas

Member of Congress



Lois Frankel

Member of Congress



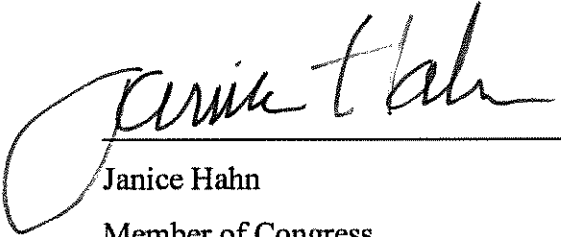
Pete Aguilar

Member of Congress



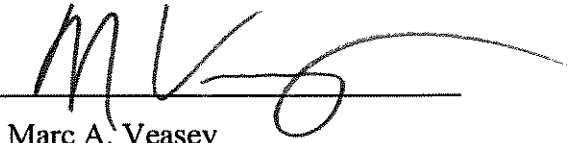
Sheila Jackson Lee

Member of Congress



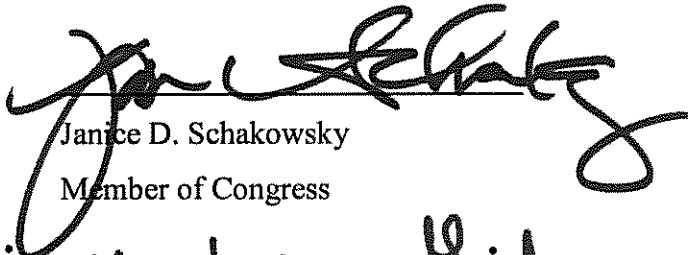
Janice Hahn

Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey

Member of Congress



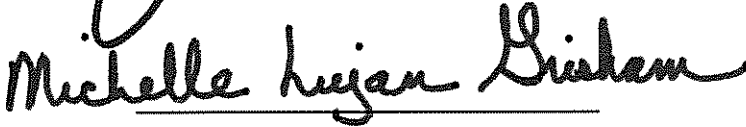
Janice D. Schakowsky

Member of Congress



Cedric L. Richmond

Member of Congress



Michelle Lujan Grisham

Member of Congress