

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 26, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
300 7th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

The Honorable Thomas D. Homan
Deputy Director and Senior Official
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Deputy Director Homan:

As Members of Congress, we write to express our collective concern regarding Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) recent targeting of immigrant rights leaders across the United States. While these individuals each have unique legal and factual underpinnings to their immigration cases, they all share a common commitment to foster a more humane immigration system. Despite their goodwill, the majority of these leaders face separation from the communities that they call home. Such leaders include: Ravi Ragbir, currently detained in New Jersey, Eliseo Jurado, currently detained in Colorado, Jean Montrevil, already deported to Haiti, and Maru Mora-Villalpando, whose near-future remains in jeopardy.¹

The sudden rash of immigrant rights activists being detained or subject to removal proceedings is not only alarming, but concerning for the local communities that we represent. Some of our constituencies have rallied together in the belief that current enforcement practices are retaliatory and aimed at leaders who advocate for full and fair consideration of individual cases. Such leaders include:

- Ravi Ragbir, the Executive Director of the New Sanctuary Coalition. Ravi was a green-card holder for twelve years before being detained for nearly two years because of a non-violent criminal conviction for wire fraud.² Since Ravi's release from immigration detention a decade ago, he has worked tirelessly to build faith-based networks of accompaniment for immigrants otherwise navigating the deportation system alone. Ravi has a U.S. Citizen wife, Amy Gottlieb, who is a Regional Director for the American Friends Service Committee, and a U.S. Citizen daughter. Ravi was detained at his ICE check-in on January 11th, and has been in detention since;

¹ Johnson, G. Seattle-area immigrant activist says she faces deportation. Associated Press. January 16, 2018.
<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/washington/articles/2018-01-16/northwest-immigrant-activist-says-she-faces-deportation>

² Robbins, L. Activists and ICE face off over detained immigrant leader. New York Times. January 12, 2018.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/12/nyregion/immigration-activist-deportation.html>

- Jean Montrevil, who co-founded the New Sanctuary Coalition with Ravi.³ He was placed in immigration proceedings because of old and non-violent drug convictions from 1989. He is a father of four U.S. Citizen children and a successful small business owner. Despite more than a decade of full compliance with the terms of his supervised release, Jean was arrested outside his home on January 3rd, transferred to detention in Florida, and deported to Haiti on January 16th;
- Eliseo Jurado, the husband of the immigrant rights activist Ingrid Encalada Latorre, was detained by ICE on January 11th while on his way to purchase groceries for his wife Ingrid and their children.⁴ Ingrid has fought her own deportation based on a non-violent criminal offense and publicly taken physical sanctuary since October 2017; and
- Maru Mora-Villalpando, who leads the Northwest Detention Center Resistance (NWDCR), a Tacoma organization that advocates for improved conditions in immigration detention and fights to keep families together.⁵

All of these leaders—Ravi, Jean, Eliseo, and Maru—are valued pillars of the immigrant rights community. They do not pose a danger; indeed, they work everyday to improve the lives of others. Moreover, their targeting may create a broader chilling effect within the community, dissuading some immigrants from invoking their legal rights for fear that doing so will result in retaliation by ICE.

Given the rash of enforcement actions against immigrant rights leaders, we respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss the intent of current enforcement actions against such persons.

We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Joe Crowley
Member of Congress

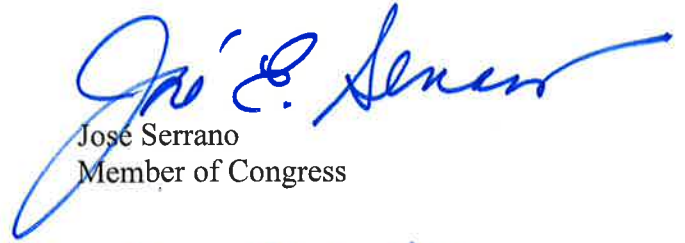
³ Sacchetti, M. and Weigel, D. ICE has detained or deported prominent immigration activists. Washington Post. January 19, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/ice-has-detained-or-deported-foreigners-who-are-also-immigration-activists/2018/01/19/377af23a-fc95-11e7-a46b-a3614530bd87_story.html?utm_term=.af3f65e72c3c

⁴ Lovett, I. and Caldwell, A. Immigrants connected to sanctuary movement arrested. Wall Street Journal. January 11, 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/immigrants-connected-to-sanctuary-movement-arrested-1515732386>

⁵ Shapiro, N. Activist Maru Mora-Villalpando says ICE using deportation threat as 'intimidation tactic'. Seattle Times. January 16, 2018. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/activist-maru-mora-villalpando-says-ice-using-her-deportation-as-intimidation-tactic/>



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



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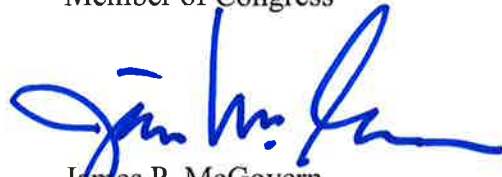
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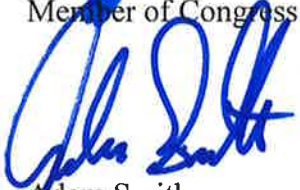
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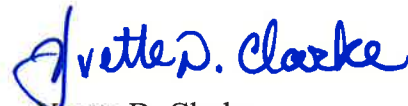
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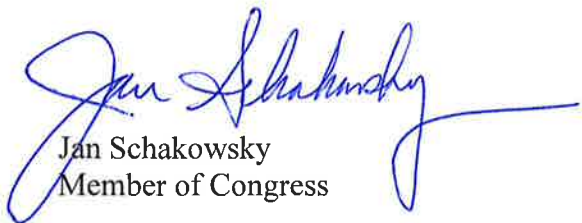
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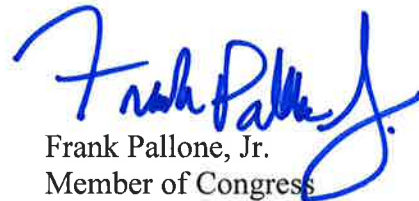
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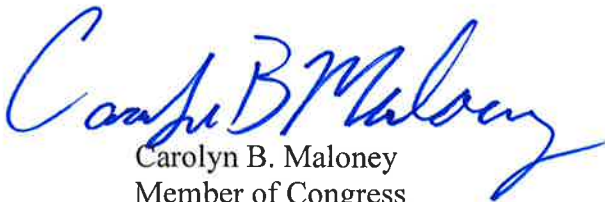
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