

# Requested Action:

Vote in favor of the Detention Oversight Not Expansion (DONE) Act, which would put a moratorium on immigration detention construction and expansion



## WHAT:

We are calling for a moratorium on immigration detention construction and expansion. Currently, there is little to no oversight and accountability in the more than 200 immigration detention facilities across the United States.

Many of these public and private facilities are rife with abuse, from sexual and physical assault to medical neglect resulting in death. This is not only a moral and human rights issue – it's a financial one.

Constituents don't know the extent to which their taxpayer dollars are being used to perpetrate these abuses. We cannot continue to expand or throw taxpayer money into a system that thrives under inadequate oversight and inhumane conditions.

## WHY:

The U.S. spends about \$2 billion a year to maintain our immigration detention system. Last year, the U.S. detained about 400,000 people.

In the 1980s, fewer than 30 people were held in detention on any given day. Since then, immigration detention facilities have skyrocketed even though unauthorized border crossings are at historic lows.

It is critical to understand that immigration detention is a form of civil confinement and, therefore, is not supposed to be punitive. But as the system has expanded, documented abuses at the hands of the government have increased and have become a form of punishment.

## HOW:

A moratorium on immigration detention construction and expansion has widespread support, with 180 members of Congress voting in favor last year. This can and should be bipartisan legislation that passes this year.

California also has stopped the expansion through the Dignity Not Detention Act (SB29) and through an amendment to the state budget (AB 103), but states alone cannot stop the expansion of private immigration detention facilities. We need the federal government to act.

## TYPES OF ABUSE IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION

### MEDICAL NEGLECT

A report we co-authored with Human Rights Watch found systemic failures that led to deaths in immigration detention. Independent medical experts agreed that substandard care was evident in 16 out of the 18 deaths analyzed between 2012 and 2015.

Dr. Marc Stern, a correctional health expert who reviewed all the documents in our report wrote, "...we have a system that is broken for detainee health care, and adding more detainees to that system can only make it worse."

At least 179 people have died in detention since 2003.

### SEXUAL ASSAULT

Through data we obtained from the DHS' Office of the Inspector General, we found widespread sexual and physical abuse in detention facilities and a lack of investigation into these reports.

For example the OIG received at least 1,016 reports of sexual abuse filed between May 2014 and July 2016, meaning that it received on average more than one complaint of sexual abuse from people in detention per day during this time period. Only 2.4% of those complaints were investigated.

People who experience abuse in detention are often faced with an ineffective and nonexistent investigative process and subjected to retaliation such as solitary confinement.

### FORCED LABOR

For-profit detention facilities run "voluntary" work programs that pay people in detention \$1 a day, which often ends up as forced labor, violating the 13th Amendment.

Recent lawsuits have revealed how immigration detention has become a modern-day form of slavery.

## ABOUT US

Freedom for Immigrants (formerly CIVIC) is devoted to abolishing immigration detention, while ending the isolation of people currently suffering in this profit-driven system. We visit and monitor 43 immigrant prisons and jails, and we run the largest national hotline for detained immigrants. Through these windows into the system, we gather data and stories to combat injustice at the individual level and push systemic change.