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Attachment HH

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Colorado State Legislators:

My name is Baltazar Abel Sosa-Valenzuela. I have live in the Colorado since I was brought here as an infant in 1981 by my parents and grew up in Boulder. I have been detained at GEO Aurora since March 28th, 2019 and I am writing in support of legislation that will give the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment the authority to inspect facilities that house immigrants, including GEO Aurora. I firmly believe that with oversight, transparency and accountability this facility can improve and be better for not only the detainees housed here but, staff as well.

I have previously been detained here at GEO Aurora three (3) other times and have never been deported. In 2006 I was detained here for 2 months before being transferred to Park County Jail for "over flow." I was housed there for over 8 months with regular jail inmates, issued urine stained sheets, had dismal health care and were basically ignored by the deputies, while ICE came by every other week to remind us that as soon as we signed out deportation papers or dropped our appeal we could be on a plane back to our countries.

The conditions here GEO Aurora could definitely be better and should consistently be improving to accommodate humanitarian and detainee needs. I believe that GEO Aurora and other facilities contracted to house detainees by the oversight that would be provided by Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. They could come in to the facility and witness for themselves the lack of soap, paper towels and running water in the medical holding area, the lack of sanitization after each group of detainees. All issues that I have previously addressed with Facility Administrator Choate and Captain Knight as one time he was walking by medical. Medical should be the cleanest place in any facility housing detainees and cleaned regularly after groups with potential communicable diseases are in there. Last year the unit I live in was quarantined two (2) separate times, once for the Mumps and once for Chickenpox.

I also believe that GEO Aurora was slow to react to the threat of COVID-19. Before the Governor's orders were issued and we voiced concerns, our dorm was filled to capacity and they had other dorms with low "over flow" numbers and one completely empty. Initially we were not even told about the Governor's orders, they locked us down for count and didn't let us out after count, slipped a piece of paper under our doors giving us an outline of how things would be done until further notice. At first they only let us out for 1 hour a day and we still had 3-8 people in our cells until it was decided that they would open up the empty dorm and send people to the "overflow dorm" to alleviate the number of detainees in the units. We currently come out 4 hours in the morning and 4 hours at night. Detainees do all of the cleaning and sanitizing. Social distancing is not occurring here, they like to say that it is but, it in fact is not happening. We had three (3) town hall meetings, one on a Tuesday, the other on a Friday of the same week and the other the following week, with roughly 40-50 people huddled together to hear what they had to say. Staff don't even adhere to the six foot social distancing rule.

Personally I find it very stressful to be detained in a facility that might keep me in medical isolation if I should be infected with COVID-19 when I should possibly be tested and at hospital being treated before the virus progresses too far. The anxiety is high and it is stressful for us who are detained here during this pandemic.

Thank you for your time and letting me share my opinion. We can only benefit from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment having the authority to inspect facilities that house immigrants.

Respectfully submitted,

