

May 27, 2020

Colorado General Assembly Members  
200 East Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Members of the Colorado General Assembly,

We are writing to you in support of the passage of a bill to ensure that everyone under the care of our State and in our communities are treated with care and respect, including people who are detained. We are in the midst of a fight to make sure that our community members in detention are treated with basic dignity and have access to needed medical care and livable conditions.

Currently, the state has little to no inspection authority of facilities contracting with the federal government, which means these facilities are not held to the same standards as other penal institutions in Colorado. Whether or not someone is being held on a civil immigration case vs. a robbery case should not impact their standards of care. We as medical professionals and Colorado community members believe our state has the responsibility to ensure the health and safety of individuals in all penal or detention facilities, because it is a matter of public health.

The accountability provided by this legislation could help reduce disease outbreaks occurring in private detention facilities, like the recently opened private Devereux facility in Westminster, Colorado that houses unaccompanied minors has demonstrated an inability to care for the children detained at that facility with a lack of mental health support, improper check-ups and untrained health staff. The recent spread of COVID-19 also leaves us concerned for the wellness of their child detainees, staff, and the surrounding community.

Another facility of concern is the private, for-profit GEO Detention facility in Aurora, Colorado. This facility in particular has proven itself to be inhospitable for the people it detains. There are multiple reports of inadequate health treatments, consistent medical neglect, and psychiatric torture. Over the past 12 months alone, there have been multiple communicative disease outbreaks that are a result of poor health conditions and a lack of medical care for those detained inside of the center. The several outbreaks of mumps, measles, and chickenpox over the last year have resulted in several quarantines, keeping families from visits with their detained loved ones, and preventing detainees from access to their attorneys.

COVID-19 has posed yet another of a series of public health threats to those in GEO/ICE detention and our surrounding community, especially since we received confirmation that 2 detainees have tested positive for the virus as of the week of May 17th. It is still unclear as to when GEO/ICE became aware of the positive COVID-19 tests, and what the delay was in reporting it to congressionals and community, which increases concern that this facility will not disclose the severity of the outbreak as it grows. Two positive cases is confirmation that this virus is already running rampant in the facility. Carlos Franco-Paredes, infectious disease expert and Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Colorado insists that "two cases means many more. In other words, two cases is an outbreak."

The positive cases are suspected to be the result of an ICE transfer of a detainee from the Sterling correctional facility in Colorado ( a facility well known to have had hundreds of positive COVID-19 cases) to the GEO facility in Aurora. The transfer of a detainee who was showing symptoms upon arrival to GEO is telling of ICE and GEO's mismanagement and mishandling of detainee and staff protection during this pandemic. Their systems and procedures have disastrously failed even before the added risk of a deadly virus, with the preventable deaths of Kamyar Samimi and Evalin-Ali Mandza.. In light of the current pandemic, and the ongoing spread of COVID-19 happening in the facility as this letter is written, we are a mere days away from this facility becoming a hotspot for viral transmission, and weeks away from it becoming a death camp.

As health professionals we are extremely concerned about the situation happening at these detention facilities and the threat they pose to the community at large. The several illness outbreaks inside of this center should be regarded with the severity of a public health crisis, as our immigrant community in detention is suffering from preventable and life-threatening diseases. We believe this bill will be a step toward mitigating the poor conditions in the center, by more regularly holding these facilities accountable for the way detainees are treated and bringing them in line with standards already adhered to by the rest of the state.

We the below signers urge you to support this legislation and work with us to ensure that everyone in our state receives the medical care they need.

In Solidarity,

Ann Fairbairn, Inner City Health Center

Alan J Winter, Retired Registered Nurse

Albert Zook, Private Practice

Alex Kim, University of Colorado College of Nursing

Angela Kantor, CU Anschutz Medical Campus

Anne Steele, The Denver Hospice

Arnie Schultz, Ph.D. Retired from Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Denver

Bitwire Kamezire, University of Colorado College of Nursing

Bob Segura, Private Practice

Bonnie Moya, Regis University

Carlos Franco-Paredes, Infectious Diseases Physician, Anschutz Medical Center, University of Colorado

Caroline m Thompson, Home Health Care

Carrie Brouillette, University of Colorado College of Nursing

Cindy Belz, Retired

Crystal Cormier-Bradley, Colorado Technical University

Crystal Santos, University of Colorado

Christina Marie Pilonetti, Comfort Keepers

Dan Moen, First Universalist Church of Denver

Danielle Loeb, MD, MPH, University of Colorado School of Medicine  
Daviyon Houston, Metropolitan State University  
Dawn Magnusson, University of Colorado  
Douglas A Fairbairn, Inner City Health Center  
Ekaterina Barkova, CU Anschutz Physical Therapy Program student  
Elizabeth Davila, Colorado Mesa University  
Emely Contreras, University of Northern Colorado  
Evelyn Bueno, CU Anschutz Medical Campus  
Evelyn Hutt, MD, University of Colorado Hospital  
Genna Bonfiglio, University of Colorado School of Medicine  
Grace C Fan, University of Colorado and Children's Hospital  
Hannah Paul, University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine  
Isabelle M Olson, University of Colorado College of Nursing  
Jessica Gonzalez-Avita, University of Colorado College of Nursing  
Jessie R Read, Jessie Read Therapy, LLC  
Joshua Molina, Aims Community College  
Joshua Scurles, CU School of Medicine, Department of Physical Therapy  
Julee Karcz, Physician Assistant, Rose Medical Center  
Julie Reichenberger, Licensed Professional Counselor  
Kate Crowe, University of Denver  
Kelly Wiepking, Licensed Professional Therapist  
Kimberly Pineda, University of Colorado  
Leah Jo Carnine, Casa De Salud  
Lisa Templeton, The Interpersonal Healing Center  
Lorena Fajardo, Children's Hospital  
Margaret McCready, Colorado University Anschutz Campus CON  
Mark Rush, Ph.D, Retired Clinical Psychologist  
Marisa Duran, University of Colorado College of Nursing  
Marissa Holliday, University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus  
Maureen Daly, MD, MPH, Colorado Public Health Consultant  
Melisa Mireles Caraveo, Metropolitan State University  
Michael Harris-Love, University of Colorado  
Michelle Driessnack, CU Anschutz Doctorate of Physical Therapy student  
Omarah Macias, University of Colorado  
Ona Ahumada, AfterHours Urgent Care  
Penelope Thron-Weber, Private Practice  
Rebecca Barker, Casper College student of nursing  
Renee Ostertag, Green Tree Mind  
Shannon C Radak, Nurse Practitioner  
Stacy Martinez, University of Colorado  
Susan Piper, Retired Registered Nurse  
Taylor Villar, medical professional student  
Terese Schissler, Retired  
Will R. Logan, Trauma therapist, Licensed Clinical Social Worker