



WRITTEN STATEMENT OF

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House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Oversight

Hearing Subject: “False Narratives Surrounding Conditions at the Delaney Hall ICE Detention Center”

July 22, 2026

Chairman Van Drew, Ranking Member Crockett, and Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for convening this hearing and for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record. My name is Amol Sinha, and I serve as Executive Director of the ACLU of New Jersey. The ACLU and our state affiliates have fought relentlessly against the abuses of power and attacks on our constitutional rights since 1920, for over 105 years, filing thousands of legal actions against both Democratic and Republican administrations, across all areas of constitutional law. It is in the spirit of nonpartisan adherence to principle that I appear before you today.

Some of our recent advocacy includes:

- **Filing suit against President Biden’s administration to halt the transfer of immigrant detainees far from their attorneys and communities.**
- **Representing the NRA at the Supreme Court to defend it against a Democratic governor’s attempts to put it out of business.**
- **Representing a supporter of President Trump’s when a New Jersey municipality attempted to prosecute her for a political sign with an expletive.**
- **Criticizing social media companies for deplatforming President Trump.**
- **Defending a crisis pregnancy center at the Supreme Court in a case about whether the Democratic Attorney General of New Jersey could target them with overbroad subpoenas.**

Over the past 18 months, we have filed over 250 legal actions against the Trump administration. These include:

- **Challenging and calling for the closure of inhumane detention facilities** including California City, “Alligator Alcatraz,” Camp East Montana at Fort Bliss, Guantanamo Bay, and others.¹
- **Winning constitutional protections for people detained at 26 Federal Plaza in New York**, where a federal court ordered ICE to end its practice of holding people in overcrowded, unconstitutional conditions, without access to food, water, medical care, or attorneys — sometimes for a week or more.²
- **Challenging the administration’s unlawful mandatory detention policy**, which stripped long-term residents, people with pending legal status applications, and community members of their right to bond hearings, in violation of decades of settled law and the Constitution. Three courts of appeal have since ruled against the administration, but the fight continues.³
- **Freeing immigrant students and scholars** who were arrested and detained for their speech.⁴

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the rights abuses inflicted on our community in recent months, and about the larger crisis unfolding across the nation's immigration detention system.

¹ H.C.R. v. Noem, No. 2:25-cv-[docket no.] (S.D. Fla. filed July 16, 2025).
 Gomez Ruiz v. ICE, No. 3:25-cv-[docket no.] (N.D. Cal. filed Nov. 13, 2025).
 Akari Angye v. ICE, No. 3:26-cv-01515 (W.D. Tex. filed May 29, 2026).

² District Court Grants Order Prohibiting ICE from Detaining Immigrants in Abusive Conditions at 26 Federal Plaza, ACLU (Sept. 17, 2025), <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/district-court-grants-order-prohibiting-ice-from-detaining-immigrants-in-abusive-conditions-at-26-federal-plaza>.

³ ACLU Applauds U.S. Appellate Court Decision Upholding Detained Immigrants' Right to Bond Hearings, ACLU (May 19, 2026), <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/aclu-applauds-u-s-appellate-court-decision-upholding-detained-immigrants-right-to-bond-hearings>.

⁴ Mahmoud Khalil to Be Freed From Detention, Reunite With Wife and Son as Case Proceeds, ACLU (June 20, 2025), <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/mahmoud-khalil-free-bail>.
 Federal Court Orders Columbia Student Mohsen Mahdawi Released on Bail, ACLU (Apr. 30, 2025), <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/federal-court-orders-columbia-student-mohsen-mahdawi-released-on-bail>.

In New Filings, Rümeyssa Öztürk's Legal Team Argue for Her Release from ICE Detention, ACLU (May 9, 2025), <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/in-new-filings-rumeyssa-ozturks-legal-team-argue-for-her-release-from-ice-detention>.

Federal Judge Rules Against Trump Administration by Keeping Dr. Khan Suri's Habeas Case in Virginia, ACLU of Virginia (July 9, 2025), <https://www.acluva.org/press-releases/federal-judge-rules-against-trump-administration-by-keeping-dr-khan-suris-habeas-case-in-virginia/>.

In the span of a week, two fathers were shot dead by federal immigration agents. Lorenzo Salgado Araujo was gunned down on the streets of Houston. Joan Sebastián Durán Guerrero was killed outside his family's apartment in Biddeford, Maine — his three-year-old daughter nearby, still in her Bluey pajamas. Her life changed forever in an instant she is too young to understand. These were not isolated incidents in some far-off places; they happened on our sidewalks, in our driveways, in front of our neighbors. This is what ICE operations look like in broad daylight: agents who fire first and answer for nothing; families left to identify bodies and explain the unexplainable to children who will grow up without a parent. And if this is what happens when the country is watching, in full view of cellphone cameras and witnesses, what confidence can we possibly have in what happens in places that the public cannot see? Behind the locked doors of facilities like Delaney Hall, away from cellphone footage and press coverage, that same culture of impunity festers unchecked. That is why the conditions inside our detention facilities demand this Committee's urgent attention today.

I want to address the premise of this hearing directly. Its title alleges that reports of maltreatment at Delaney Hall are the product of a “false narrative.” That allegation does not survive contact with the verifiable public record about Delaney Hall: hundreds of habeas petitions, an SOS letter signed by nearly 300 detained people, a hunger strike led by hundreds of detainees, the death of Jean Wilson Brutus while he was in custody at Delaney Hall, congressional oversight visits that resulted in corroborated claims of deplorable conditions, contemporaneous reporting on detention conditions from media outlets across the political spectrum, my own conversations with people who are or have been detained and their loved ones, and more.⁵

At the outset, I want to name who is missing from this room. The people locked inside Delaney Hall are not here — we know why. But ICE officials and representatives of GEO Group, the private prison company profiting from their detention, are conspicuously absent as well. Detained individuals cannot be expected to testify before this Subcommittee. Their jailers can. At a minimum, the company and the agency responsible for the horrific conditions that led to this hearing owe the American taxpayers, whose money lines GEO Group's pockets, some transparency and some answers.

As for the detained people at Delaney, they've fought valiantly to have their voices heard.

“They constantly threaten to deport us, transfer us to punishment units, and move us from one detention center to another; they take photos of us in the dormitories without our consent and tell us that we have no rights here.”⁶

⁵ See SOS: A Letter from Delaney Hall (June 2026), <https://www.lahuelga.com/sos> ; U.S. Gov’t Accountability Office, GAO-26-108886, Immigration Detention: Waste and Performance Issues at Camp East Montana (June 2026), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-26-108886.pdf> ; 41-Year-Old Detainee at Newark Migrant Jail Died in Custody, ICE Says, N.J. Monitor (Dec. 19, 2025), <https://newjerseymonitor.com/2025/12/19/ice-detainee-newark-jail-died/> .

⁶ SOS: A Letter from Delaney Hall, *supra*.

“They tell us we have no rights here.” Those are the words of detained people inside Delaney Hall, scribbled on handwritten letters. The administration has done everything in its power to prevent the outside world from knowing what is happening inside, but the people they have detained refuse to be silenced. Contrary to what the title of this hearing and DHS Secretary Mullin would have you believe, these are not pre-drafted statements from formal press releases or part of some orchestrated campaign. People detained at Delaney Hall put pen to paper under threat of punishment and passed those letters out. They starved themselves to force all of us to pay attention. They felt they had no other option.

What is Happening Inside Delaney Hall

The conditions the people detained at Delaney Hall are describing are not the complaints of people asking for luxury. They have painted a vivid and devastating picture of how far this administration and the private prison companies it contracts with will go to strip people of any semblance of dignity. Several Members of Congress have confirmed these conditions after oversight visits inside the facility:

- Systematic and egregious medical neglect, including denial of care to pregnant people, the elderly, and people with serious health conditions.⁷
- Rancid and inedible food, including milk curdled solid — food so bad that detained people have described going hungry rather than eating it.⁸
- Coercion, including pressuring detained people into signing voluntary departure orders and deportation documents they do not understand and did not agree to sign, sometimes by outright lying to them about the legal consequences.

I’ve met with several individuals who were recently detained at Delaney Hall. One individual I spoke with told me that when he arrived at Delaney Hall, the food there was so rancid that he did not eat for three days. And when he finally ate to avoid starvation, he experienced severe stomach pain. When he asked a guard for medical help, the guard said he only spoke English so he couldn’t help. It took seven more days for a doctor to even see this individual, and he did not receive adequate medical care by the time he was released from Delaney Hall; the pain was so severe that he had to go to the hospital. Doctors told him he had developed a severe lower GI issue during his time in detention and required surgery. He was hospitalized for a week.

There are many, many more examples:

⁷*Id.*

⁸ What’s Really Happening at Delaney Hall?, American Friends Service Committee (June 2026), <https://afsc.org/news/whats-really-happening-delaney-hall> ; RELEASE: Gottheimer Visits Delaney Hall ICE Detention Center (May 31, 2026), <https://gottheimer.house.gov/posts/release-gottheimer-visits-delaney-hall-ice-detention-center> .

Emanuel Rodrigues, 38, a medically vulnerable person who requires crutches or a wheelchair, was deprived of both mobility aids for forty days at Delaney Hall – receiving the wheelchair only after a fall that landed him in the hospital – and was subsequently moved into medical isolation for four months, according to Representative Rob Menendez, who has conducted fifteen separate oversight visits to the facility.⁹

Ariadna Zumba, an 18-year-old high school senior, was detained while visiting a friend in another detention center, and held at Delaney Hall for nearly two months before her release in early June 2026, amid the labor and hunger strike. While detained, the facility denied her access to the technology her local high school had arranged so she could complete coursework remotely and graduate on schedule.¹⁰

Miguel Ortega lost more than twenty pounds during roughly a month in detention, according to his wife, Rosalinda Ortega, who said he reported that lying down had become physically painful because of his weight loss and that he was not being adequately fed. “Yesterday I called, they said stop calling and be patient,” she said. “How can I be patient when they have him and [are] mistreating him?”¹¹

When detained people spoke up about these conditions, exercising the most basic human impulse to demand to be treated with dignity, ICE responded with pepper spray, solitary confinement, and punitive transfers.¹² As Congresswoman Analilia Mejía confirmed following her oversight visit, at least four people were hospitalized after guards beat them and deployed a chemical agent inside the facility.¹³ She described seeing the aftermath herself in the medical unit.

I would remind you that all these descriptions come from what is supposedly civil, non-punitive detention.

New Jersey Never Wanted Delaney Hall

New Jersey made its opposition to Delaney Hall clear from the start. The City of Newark filed suit against GEO Group in 2025, alleging the company made facility modifications without required state permits or oversight.¹⁴ Governor Sherrill has called for its closure. The Attorney

⁹ Adrian Carrasquillo, How Delaney Hall Became Ground Zero in Trump's Deportation Wars, *The Bulwark* (June 2026), <https://www.thebulwark.com/p/how-delaney-hall-new-jersey-became-ground-zero-trump-deportation-wars>.

¹⁰ Henry Craver, What's Really Happening at Delaney Hall?, *Am. Friends Serv. Comm.* (June 2026), <https://afsc.org/news/whats-really-happening-delaney-hall>.

¹¹ Newark ICE Detainees Escaped Delaney Hall, Officials Confirm, *NBC N.Y.* (June 14, 2025), <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/new-jersey/newark-ice-detention-missing-delaney-hall-search/6301676/>.

¹² Biplob Kumar Das & Noah Hurowitz, ICE Pepper-Sprayed Delaney Hall Detainees for Hunger Strike, *The Intercept* (May 29, 2026), <https://theintercept.com/2026/05/29/ice-pepper-spray-nj-newark-delaney/>.

¹³ Families Allege Newark ICE Center Guards Beat, Tear-Gassed Detainees, *Gothamist* (May 2026), <https://gothamist.com/news/family-activists-allege-newark-immigration-center-guards-beat-and-used-gas-on-detainees>.

¹⁴ Steve Janoski, Judge Sends Newark's Lawsuit Against Delaney Hall Operator to Mediation, *The Jersey Vindicator* (May 22, 2026), <https://jerseyvindicator.org/2026/05/22/judge-sends-newarks-lawsuit-against-delaney-hall-operator-to-mediation/>.

General just recently had to sue to force health inspectors inside the facility.¹⁵ Our communities organized, showed up, and said ‘no’ loudly and repeatedly. A few weeks ago, it was reported that the family of Geraldine Delaney, for whom the facility is named, also wants to see it closed. Her niece, Marianne Delaney said that “it was intended to be a 250-bed facility to do good, to save people’s lives, not to be a warehouse for human despair, which it appears to have turned into.” She described it as the antithesis of everything her aunt stood for.¹⁶

None of this has stopped the federal government from imposing this facility on a city and state that had clearly refused it.

The administration insists Delaney Hall is necessary to ensure public safety. Its own data says otherwise. An analysis of internal ICE records found that of the more than of 10,300 people who have passed through Delaney Hall since it reopened, 70.5 percent have no criminal history of any kind — not a conviction, not a pending criminal charge, nothing.¹⁷ Among the small share who do have a conviction, the single largest category — accounting for 39 percent of all convictions — is traffic offenses.¹⁸ And 84.2 percent of the people held at Delaney Hall, as of the most recent available data, do not even have a final removal order — meaning the government is detaining them at a cost of millions of dollars a year while it has no current legal authority to deport them at all.¹⁹ Of the most recent population analysis, more than 88% of people at Delaney Hall had no criminal conviction.²⁰

This is what a facility built for profit and detention quotas looks like. The data from Delaney Hall mirrors the national picture: across the country, the vast majority of people in ICE detention have no criminal conviction, and a significant majority have never been charged with any crime.²¹ Detaining people like a U-visa applicant with no charges, or a father picking up diapers for his children, does not make New Jersey or this country even a tiny bit safer. It does, however, generate more than \$60 million a year in guaranteed revenue for a private prison company from Delaney Hall alone, coming directly out of taxpayers’ pockets.

And yet no representative of GEO Group is here to explain why the company has fought against basic health inspections that would be required of any similar facilities. No ICE or DHS official is here to explain why they continue to cage hundreds of people at Delaney Hall – or tens of

¹⁵ New Jersey Sues Delaney Hall Operators for Access After Allegations of Inhumane Conditions, KESQ/CNN (June 2, 2026), <https://kesq.com/news/national-world/cnn-national/2026/06/02/newark-officials-threaten-more-legal-action-if-they-dont-get-access-to-delaney-hall/>.

¹⁶ Family of Delaney Hall Namesake Condemns ‘Warehouse of Human Despair’ (June 16, 2026), <https://www.ms.now/news/delaney-hall-new-jersey-ice-facility-conditions-trump-immigration>

¹⁷ Delaney Hall Detention Center: A Data Profile, Austin Kocher (May 29, 2026), <https://austinkocher.substack.com/p/delaney-hall-detention-center-a-data> (noting Delaney Hall reopened as an ICE facility on May 1, 2025).

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Immigration Detention Quick Facts, TRAC Reports (Syracuse Univ.), <https://tracreports.org/immigration/quickfacts/>.

thousands at facilities across the country – who have no criminal convictions or final orders of removal.²²

Since the subcommittee is interested in false narratives, let's compare the administration's disinformation campaign with New Jersey's actual safety record. In 2025, the Immigrant Trust Directive limiting state and local police assistance with civil immigration enforcement was in full effect statewide, and New Jersey recorded a 28 percent decrease in shootings from 2024 and the fourth consecutive annual decline, with shooting deaths down 31 percent and now at an all-time low since statewide tracking began in 2009.²³ Gun violence in 2025 was down more than 60 percent from its 2016 peak.²⁴ All of this happened while New Jersey was limiting cooperation with ICE. If immigration enforcement and detention capacity were the deciding factor in public safety, the state would not be experiencing its safest period on record.

Delaney Hall is not the only imposition. The administration also purchased a warehouse in Roxbury, New Jersey for \$129.3 million — double its assessed value, to use as a detention center capable of holding up to 1,500 people, again without meaningful notice or local input.²⁵ At a moment when New Jersey families are struggling with inflation, high gas prices, and the rising cost of basic necessities like groceries, the federal government has chosen to waste millions of dollars on reckless and ill-conceived plans to expand its detention system rather than invest in our communities. It has extracted from communities — their land, their public resources, their peace — and handed the returns to private prison companies like GEO Group, which reported a record \$254 million in profit last year.²⁶

Delaney Hall Is Not an Outlier

The conditions at Delaney Hall are not an isolated failure. Delaney Hall is a mirror — reflecting a detention system this administration has tried to supersize with billions of dollars in new funding, with little to no transparency or accountability, and active obstruction of oversight at every turn.²⁷

²² Alex Nowrasteh & Graeme Blair, *One Year of Immigration Enforcement Under the Second Trump Administration*, Deportation Data Project (Apr. 7, 2026), <https://deportationdata.org/analysis/immigration-enforcement-first-year.html>.

²³ New Jersey Shootings Fell Sharply in 2025, State Officials Say, *The Jersey Vindicator* (Jan. 6, 2026), <https://jerseyvindicator.org/2026/01/06/new-jersey-shootings-fell-sharply-in-2025-state-officials-say/>.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ News, ICE Paid \$129.3 Million for New Jersey Warehouse Set for Use as Detention Center, *CoStar* (Feb. 26, 2026); U.S. Paid \$129.3 Million for New Jersey Warehouse for Large-Scale Immigrant Detention Center, *The Jersey Vindicator* (Feb. 26, 2026), <https://jerseyvindicator.org/2026/02/26/u-s-paid-129-3-million-for-new-jersey-warehouse-for-large-scale-immigrant-detention-center/>.

²⁶ GEO Group, Inc., Annual Report (Form 8-K) (Feb. 12, 2026), <https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/0000923796/000119312525267980/d10858dex991.htm>.

²⁷ Congressional Republicans' One Big Beautiful Bill Act Creates an Unaccountable Slush Fund for the Trump Administration's Deportation Force, *Ctr. for Am. Progress* (Feb. 24, 2026), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/congressional-republicans-one-big-beautiful-bill-act-creates-an-unaccountable-slush-fund-for-the-trump-administrations-deportation-force/>.

This year alone, there have been at least six other hunger strikes at ICE facilities — in Tacoma, Washington; Alvarado, Texas; Allentown, Pennsylvania; Baldwin, Michigan; and Adelanto, California.²⁸ The Tacoma facility alone has seen nine separate strikes in 2026.²⁹ And at every one of these facilities detained people are describing the same things: dangerous medical neglect, unsafe water, rotten food, indefinite detention with no meaningful process, guard abuse, and retaliation for speaking out.³⁰

Five of these six facilities — including Delaney Hall — are operated by private prison corporations. Four are run by GEO Group.³¹ GEO Group’s former executive, David Venturella, now serves as acting director of ICE.³²

Just last week, Human Rights Watch and the ACLU released a joint report on Camp East Montana, the sprawling detention facility built on the grounds of Fort Bliss, Texas—the largest immigration detention center in the nation. Based on interviews with 71 detained people, the report found that roughly 90 percent said they had either been physically assaulted by staff or personally witnessed others being beaten, alongside accounts of denied medical care, spoiled food, and units left without basic hygiene supplies. The report takes its title from something a guard told one detainee during intake: that the only way out of the facility was deportation or death.

A recent Government Accountability Office report on Camp East Montana at Fort Bliss also found what it described as “*significant, pervasive issues*” throughout the facility: contracting failures resulting in millions of dollars in wasted government funding, health assessments going undone, a loaded firearm lost somewhere on the grounds.³³ There have also been reports of widespread medical neglect and sexual abuse at Camp East Montana.³⁴

None of this was unforeseeable. These were precisely the conditions we warned about when we fought to keep Delaney Hall from opening, and the same warnings we are raising now about the Roxbury facility. When you build a system designed to hold hundreds of thousands of people —

²⁸ Hundreds at Delaney Hall Join Detained People Across Country in Hunger Strike Against Inhumane Conditions, ACLU (June 2026), <https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/hundreds-at-delaney-hall-join-detained-people-across-country-in-hunger-strike-against-inhumane-conditions>.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² A Former GEO Group Executive Now Runs ICE. The Company’s Government Ties Run Deep, NPR (June 4, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/06/03/nx-s1-5836625/geo-group-private-prisons-ice-close-ties>.

³³ U.S. Gov’t Accountability Office, GAO-26-108886, *supra*; Watchdog Finds Waste and Unsanitary Conditions at ICE Facility Inside Fort Bliss, CBS News (June 2026), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/watchdog-finds-waste-and-unsanitary-conditions-at-ice-facility-inside-fort-bliss/>.

³⁴ *Fort Bliss Passes ICE Inspection Despite Abuse and Inhumane Conditions*, ACLU (Dec. 8, 2025, updated Apr. 13, 2026), <https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/detained-immigrants-detail-physical-abuse-and-inhumane-conditions-at-largest-immigration-detention-center-in-the-u-s>.

when you pour billions into a detention infrastructure already riddled with abuse and treat oversight as an obstacle rather than a safeguard — it comes at a human cost.

The Deadliest Period for Immigration Detention in Decades

People are dying in these facilities. At least 50 people have died in ICE custody since the beginning of this administration — the highest toll on record.³⁵ Among them was Jean Wilson Brutus, a 41-year-old Haitian man who died on December 12, 2025, just one day after arriving at Delaney Hall.³⁶ He suffered a medical emergency inside the facility and was transported to University Hospital in Newark, where he was pronounced dead. His family and their attorneys stated that Mr. Brutus entered custody with no documented cardiovascular history and showed no signs of distress at intake.³⁷ A local activist who holds vigils outside the facility reported hearing, over guards' walkie-talkies, discussion of a medical emergency, and witnesses reported that the ambulance that came for Jean was delayed at the facility gate while staff prioritized processing a van of newly arriving detained people.³⁸ Like Jean, each of the more than 50 people who have died in ICE custody had a name. Each had a family. Each died under the custody and care of the United States government, in conditions funded by our tax dollars.

The administration recently moved to ensure we hear less about these deaths: ICE eliminated its requirement to report deaths that occur within 30 days of a person's release from custody.³⁹ That rule existed for one reason — to prevent ICE from releasing dying people at the last possible moment to avoid accountability. Now it is gone. We are being asked to understand that as a technicality. It is not. It is yet another deliberate policy to conceal the actions of a dangerous agency at the deadliest moment in immigration detention in over two decades.

Response to Largely Peaceful Protests

The shock and emotional toll of the killings of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo and Joan Sebastián Durán Guerrero deeply resonate with the people of New Jersey, where immigrant communities were already watching Delaney Hall with fear and grief. This is the same state where families gathered peacefully to support loved ones on hunger strike and were met with gas canisters, and batons. New Jersey families now carry both fears at once: the fear of what is happening to a

³⁵ Casey Tolan et al., ICE to Stop Reporting Deaths of Recently Released Detainees Amid Scrutiny, CNN (June 5, 2026), <https://www.cnn.com/2026/06/05/us/ice-death-reports-recently-released-detainees-hnk>.

³⁶ 41-Year-Old Detainee at Newark Migrant Jail Died in Custody, ICE Says, *supra*.

³⁷ Exclusive: Family Demands Answers After ICE Detainee's Death in New Jersey, NBC N.Y. (Dec. 22, 2025), <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/exclusive-family-demands-answers-after-ice-detainees-death/6433989/>.

³⁸ Following Delaney Hall's First Death Since Reopening, Immigrant Advocates Demand Answers and Investigation, ACLU-NJ (Dec. 19, 2025), <https://www.aclu-nj.org/press-releases/following-delaney-halls-first-death-since-reopening-immigrant-advocates-demand-answers-and-investigation/>.

³⁹ ICE Will Stop Reporting Deaths of Recently Released Detainees, Tucson Sentinel (June 8, 2026), https://www.tucsonsentinel.com/local/report/060826_ice_death_reporting/.

parent or spouse inside Delaney Hall, and the fear of what could happen to them if they show up outside it to advocate for that person. When federal agents have shot and killed unarmed people in broad daylight and have detained a mayor and jostled a member of Congress for standing at a fence, the message to every immigrant family in New Jersey is unmistakable: being an immigrant, or even exercising your right to stand in solidarity with immigrants, is unsafe. It is not the isolated conduct of a few agents. It is what happens when an agency knows it will not be held accountable—for who it stops on the street, for who it detains behind closed doors, or for how it treats the people who dare to stand outside and ask why. ICE agents have responded to largely peaceful demonstrations outside of Delaney Hall by hitting protesters with batons, shoving people into the path of oncoming vehicles, and assaulting journalists.⁴⁰ They even pepper-sprayed Senator Andy Kim while he attempted a congressional oversight visit.⁴¹

The right to peacefully assemble and protest the conduct of our government is not a courtesy extended at the discretion of federal agents — it is guaranteed by the First Amendment, and it does not evaporate because the government finds the protest inconvenient. For more than a year, since Delaney Hall reopened in May 2025, community members, families, and faith groups have maintained near-constant vigils outside its gates — and in recent weeks, those vigils grew into sustained, round-the-clock demonstrations involving hundreds of people, week after week, including children holding signs and keeping watch for parents detained inside the facility.⁴² We do not dispute that isolated incidents of violence by civilians have occurred at these protests, and that such conduct should be met with accountability.

But accountability for the individuals responsible for endangering law enforcement and other protestors is not what we have seen. Instead, federal agents have repeatedly met the protest as a whole with indiscriminate force. In one documented incident, agents rushed across four lanes of traffic to tackle a veteran and volunteer medic who was treating demonstrators' pepper-spray exposure, shoved his face into the pavement, handcuffed him, and later left him stranded on the side of the road in the middle of the night. He did not pose any threat, he was simply there.⁴³ Treating an entire crowd as a threat because a handful of people behaved badly is not law enforcement; it is collective punishment, and it chills the very oversight and accountability that this Subcommittee should want more of, not less. For more than four weeks, this administration has turned our state, the city of Newark, and Delaney Hall — a facility New Jersey never wanted

⁴⁰ Starved, Smashed and Bloodied: The Violence at ICE's Delaney Hall, The Handbasket (May 2026), <https://www.thehandbasket.co/p/delaney-hall-hunger-strike-newark-new-jersey-ice-violence-protests>.

⁴¹ CHC Chair Espaillat Conducts Oversight Visit at Delaney Hall Immigration Detention Center Amid Hunger Strike, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, <https://chc.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/chc-chair-espaillat-conducts-oversight-visit-delaney-hall-immigration>.

⁴² Pepper-Sprayed Yet Undeterred: Faith Leaders Keep Ministering at Delaney Hall, Religion News Service (June 4, 2026), <https://religionnews.com/2026/06/04/pepper-sprayed-yet-undeterred-faith-leaders-keep-ministering-at-delaney-hall/>.

⁴³ Feds Arrest 2 amid ICE Clashes with Protesters Outside Delaney Hall in Newark, Gothamist (May 26, 2026), <https://gothamist.com/news/feds-arrest-2-amid-ice-clashes-with-protesters-outside-delaney-hall-in-newark>.

in the first place — into yet another testing ground for how far its lawlessness can go without accountability

The Need for Oversight

If the Subcommittee is concerned about the “narrative” around Delaney Hall, there is an easy solution: end the cover-up and obfuscation by ICE and Geo Group. If you want the truth about what’s happening in Delaney Hall, and every facility like it, open it up to independent, unannounced, and uncensored oversight. But we all know we won’t get that kind of transparency, and we all know why. An immigration detention system that behaves like a network of black sites, answerable to no one, visible only through carefully stage-managed visits and its own propaganda, is not a system that has earned the benefit of the doubt from the American public, the taxpayers funding it.

This is the Subcommittee on Oversight, and I implore you to do that job and scrutinize a failing ICE detention system and a failing facility in Delaney Hall. A facility that operates with confidence in its own conduct has no need to cut family visitations short, control what Members of Congress see, how long they stay, and who they speak with during oversight visits. Yet that is precisely how Delaney Hall functions. Governor Sherrill was given a single hour-long, ICE-escorted tour and was not permitted to speak to a single detained person, during her visit.⁴⁴ State health inspectors were allowed into the kitchen and food-service area but barred from the medical unit, the sleeping areas, and the bathing and toileting facilities — the exact places where the worst allegations originate.⁴⁵ Members of Congress have been made to wait outside of Delaney Hall and other detention facilities for hours before being granted entry guaranteed by statute, if they are granted entry at all.⁴⁶ Even when a visit is allowed, it unfolds entirely on the government and Geo Group's terms: which units are shown, which detained people are permitted to speak, and which rooms or areas are simply not on the tour. That is not oversight. It is crisis management.

Despite the ongoing obstruction to Congressional oversight authority, almost every time a Member of Congress has gotten inside Delaney Hall, we have learned something the administration did not want us to know. Every visit has produced testimony that shocked the conscience. Every oversight visit over these last few weeks has mattered. We need Members of Congress to keep showing up — not once, but repeatedly, insistently, across facilities

⁴⁴ NJ Gov. Sherrill Allowed Inside Delaney Hall ICE Detention Center, Gothamist (June 11, 2026), <https://gothamist.com/news/nj-gov-sherrill-allowed-inside-delaney-hall-ice-detention-center>.

⁴⁵ New Jersey Attorney General, City of Newark Pursue Legal Action to Get Health Inspectors into Delaney Hall ICE Facility, ABC News (June 2, 2026), <https://abcnews.com/US/newark-sue-feds-close-delaney-hall-ice-facility/story?id=133513879>.

⁴⁶ Crow: Members of Congress Have Legal Right to Enter Detention Facilities and Conduct Oversight, Office of Rep. Jason Crow (May 12, 2025), <https://crow.house.gov/media/press-releases/crow-members-of-congress-have-legal-right-to-enter-detention-facilities-and-conduct-oversight>.

nationwide. The administration's core strategy is information suppression, and oversight visits are one of the few tools piercing through their information blackouts.

We also urge Congress to advance Representative Jayapal and Senator Booker's Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act, which would establish enforceable standards for conditions of confinement, strengthen independent oversight, and protect detained people from the abuses we are documenting in real time.⁴⁷

The people who were on hunger strike at Delaney Hall did something extraordinary. At great personal risk, knowing they could be pepper-sprayed, thrown in solitary, or transferred in the middle of the night to a facility hours from their families and lawyers, they refused to be invisible. They put their bodies on the line so that we cannot pretend we did not know how they were being treated on the inside.

At a time when their children should be enjoying summer break, those children were standing outside a detention center holding signs, keeping watch for parents who cannot come home. The detained people at Delaney Hall were told, "*You have no rights here.*" They refused to accept that. They asserted their humanity and their rights through peaceful protest, at extraordinary personal cost. They have held up their end. Now it is our turn to act. We urge Congress to demand transparency, conduct repeated and sustained oversight visits, advance the Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act, and use every tool at its disposal to heed the demands of the people detained at Delaney Hall.

I respectfully ask that this statement, and the sources cited in it, be entered into the hearing record in full.

Thank you.

⁴⁷ Booker Announces Legislation Cracking Down on ICE Detention Facilities & Practices Following Tour of Delaney Hall, Office of Sen. Cory Booker (Jan. 23, 2026), <https://www.booker.senate.gov/news/press/booker-announces-legislation-cracking-down-on-ice-detention-facilities-and-practices-following-tour-of-delaney-hall>; Jayapal, Smith Introduce Legislation to End Inhumane Immigration Detention Conditions, Office of Rep. Pramila Jayapal (Dec. 3, 2025), <https://jayapal.house.gov/2025/12/03/jayapal-smith-introduce-legislation-to-end-inhumane-immigration-detention-conditions/>.