



Matthew R. Segal
Legal Director
(617) 482-3170 ext. 330
msegal@aclum.org

March 12, 2020

Via Email

Todd M. Lyons
Acting Field Office Director
Enforcement and Removal Operations, Boston Field Office
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
1000 District Avenue
Burlington, MA 01803

Re: *ICE enforcement and COVID-19*

Dear Director Lyons:

I write to ask that you take urgent measures to align the practices of ICE's Boston Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) with the public health need to mitigate the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Community transmission of COVID-19 is now ongoing in Massachusetts, and ICE's practices will influence its severity. If residents of immigrant communities decline to seek medical treatment because they fear immigration enforcement, the impact and spread of COVID-19 could worsen. If individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 are placed in immigration detention, the spread of the virus in detention centers will be swift and unstoppable. And COVID-19's threat to detainees, correctional staff, and the broader community only increases with each additional person detained.

In short, the more people ICE targets and detains during the COVID-19 pandemic, the more deadly the consequences might be for detainees, correctional staff, and others. Accordingly, I urge you to take four immediate actions to protect the health and safety of all Massachusetts residents:

- Publicly reaffirm the Boston ERO's commitment to treat medical and healthcare facilities, including hospitals and doctors' offices, as "[sensitive locations](#)" where ICE enforcement normally will not occur.

Acting Field Office Director Todd M. Lyons

March 12, 2020

Page 2

- Direct the Boston ERO and its partners to ensure that immigration detainees have adequate and free access to health care, hygiene products, and telephone and other communication services, including confidential calls with attorneys.
- Direct the Boston ERO to increase its use of alternatives to detention, and to cease all new detentions.
- Direct the Boston ERO to undertake a case-by-case review of the individuals currently in its custody and identify those who should be released.

Although ICE may previously have made case-by-case determinations regarding detention, these determinations were presumably not made with a global pandemic in mind. It is now critical to recalibrate each of these decisions in light of the urgent public health risks posed by COVID-19 in a carceral setting.

Although in many respects your office and mine probably have different views about which policies advance public safety, when it comes to COVID-19 perhaps we can find common ground. We hope you will agree that, for the sake of all Massachusetts residents and communities, customary enforcement practices must be altered to address this pandemic.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this letter with you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Matthew R. Segal

cc: Mary L. Larakers, Esq.
Mark A. Sauter, Esq.