

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

October 21, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 20032

Dear Secretary Noem:

In recent months, following an unprecedented and unnecessary funding increase from Republicans in Congress,¹ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has undertaken an intensive recruitment campaign to hire approximately 10,000 additional personnel.² This campaign appears designed to facilitate President Trump's goal to deport one million individuals per year and arrest at least 3,000 individuals per day.³ To meet this quota, scores of masked and unidentified federal agents have conducted unlawful arrests—including of U.S. citizens⁴—and engaged in excessive force without clear cause.⁵ Whether it is an officer mishandling a gun and pointing it at bystanders or federal agents arresting U.S. citizen children in the dead of night, these mishaps have terrible consequences on immigrants and U.S. citizens alike.⁶ We are deeply

¹ See One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72 (2025); see also Camilo Montoya-Galvez, *Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill" Gives ICE Unprecedented Funds to Ramp Up Mass Deportation Campaign*, CBS NEWS (July 10, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ice-funding-big-beautiful-bill-trump-deportations/> ("One Big Beautiful Bill Act" provided \$170 billion to immigration enforcement and border security efforts, including nearly \$30 billion to fund arrests and deportation).

² Rebecca Santana, *ICE Entices New Recruits with Patriotism Pitch and Promise of \$50,000 Signing Bonuses*, AP (July 30, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/immigration-hiring-trump-border-mass-deportations-ed1580c3f5c0c2a2b5c1ebd621574365>.

³ See *id.*; Ted Hesson, *Trump Administration Ousts Top ICE Officials Amid Migrant Arrest Push*, REUTERS (May 29, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-ousts-top-ice-officials-amid-migrant-arrest-push-2025-05-29/>; Amna Nawaz & Laura Baron Lopez, *GOP Gives ICE Massive Budget Increase to Expand Trump's Deportation Effort*, PBS NEWS HOUR (July 8, 2025), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/gop-gives-ice-massive-budget-increase-to-expand-trumps-deportation-effort>.

⁴ See e.g., Anthony Effinger, *Milwaukie Man Says ICE Abducted and Held Him for Hours Despite His Proving Citizenship*, WILLAMETTE WEEK (Oct. 7, 2025), <https://www.wweek.com/news/2025/10/07/milwaukie-man-says-he-was-abducted-by-ice-and-held-for-hours-despite-proving-citizenship/>; George Retes, *I'm a U.S. Citizen Who Was Wrongly Arrested and Held by ICE. Here Is Why You Could Be Next*, S.F. CHRON. (Sept. 16, 2025), <https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/openforum/article/ice-racial-profiling-21045429.php>; Jazmine Ulloa, Allison McCann & Jennifer Medina, *'I'm From Here!': U.S. Citizens Are Ending Up in Trump's Dragnet*, N.Y. TIMES (Sept. 29, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/29/us/trump-immigration-agents-us-citizens.html>.

⁵ See e.g., Meg Anderson, *Tackles, Projectiles and Gunfire: Many Fear ICE Tactics are Growing More Violent*, NPR (Oct. 13, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/10/13/nx-s1-5566785/ice-dhs-immigration-tactics-more-violent>; David Ibáñez, *El Paso Family Seeks Justice After Border Patrol Allegedly Killed Their Dog During Search*, KFOX14 (Oct. 16, 2025), <https://www.kfoxtv.com/news/local/el-paso-family-seeks-justice-after-border-patrol-allegedly-killed-their-dog-during-search>.

⁶ *Id.*; Rebekah Riess & Bill Kirkos, *Thirty-Seven People Arrested and American Kids Separated from Parents After ICE Raid at Chicago Apartments*, CNN (Oct. 3, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/10/03/us/chicago-apartment-ice-raid>.

concerned that these cruel, unlawful, and unprofessional actions will be worsened by lowering standards for recruiting law enforcement officials to work at ICE.

To expand its applicant pool, ICE launched a campaign to recruit “patriots” and “defend the homeland.”⁷ ICE has also changed the age requirements for new recruits. Prior to the change in policy, individuals were required to be at least 21 years old and no older than 37 or 40, depending on the position.⁸ The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that applicants now can apply at the age of 18 and there is no age cap.⁹ ICE also removed its Spanish-language requirement, shortening the training program by five weeks, and is pursuing additional ways to expedite training.¹⁰ In addition, aggressive recruitment efforts have attracted candidates who are not able to pass the physical fitness test—more than a third of new recruits have failed so far.¹¹ ICE then has to decide whether to slot those individuals into administrative positions or terminate them; the process has been described by a senior ICE official as “a disaster.”¹²

ICE advertisements frequently appear on social media platforms and television, with the agency reportedly spending millions of dollars to target potential recruits in select metropolitan areas.¹³ Ads promise incentives such as cash signing bonuses of \$50,000, student loan forgiveness, and overtime pay.¹⁴ ICE’s advertisements promote relaxed eligibility standards and often rely on inflammatory imagery and messaging. One ad depicts a young man and an older man in tactical gear, both holding weapons, with the slogan “NO AGE CAP JOIN ICE NOW” across the bottom, and a caption reading, “We’re taking father/son bonding to a whole new level.”¹⁵ Other ads adopt polarizing messaging to appeal to potential recruits, including promoting anti-immigrant and racist tropes from official DHS accounts.¹⁶ One urges new recruits to “defend

⁷ U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Security, *DHS Launches ‘Defend the Homeland’ Nationwide to Recruit Patriots to Join ICE Law Enforcement and Remove Worst of the Worst from U.S.* (July 29, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/07/29/dhs-launches-defend-homeland-nationwide-recruit-patriots-join-ice-law-enforcement>.

⁸ Rebecca Santana, *Homeland Security Removes Age Limits for ICE Recruits to Boost Hiring for Trump Deportations*, AP (Aug. 6, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/ice-immigration-trump-mass-deportations-border-249268f025baa6920fb4370e8e297049>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Rebecca Santana, *What to Know: Four Ways ICE is Training New Agents and Scaling Up*, AP (Aug. 24, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/border-immigration-mass-deportation-ice-trump-2bb1cfbafae8c65d167c0c44ca5d7b43>.

¹¹ Miroff, Nick, *ICE’s ‘Athletically Allergic’ Recruits: Push-ups, Sit-ups, and a Brisk Jog Pose a Threat to Trump’s Deportation Campaign*, THE ATLANTIC (Oct. 20, 2025), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/10/ice-recruits-fitness-test-trump/684625/>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Thomas Beaumont & Rebecca Santana, *ICE Airs Ads Stirring Up Local Frustration to Recruit Police for Mass Deportation Efforts*, AP (Oct. 6, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-mass-deportations-ice-immigration-ads-473a7ac193cff625476f1ee21f82facd> (“The 30-second spots began running in mid-September in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Boston; Chicago; Denver; New York; Philadelphia; Sacramento, California; Seattle; and Washington, D.C. Adding to the list a week ago: Atlanta; Dallas; El Paso, Texas; Houston; Miami; Salt Lake City; and San Antonio. As of [October 6], total spending on the ads had topped \$6.5 million...”).

¹⁴ Rebecca Santana, *Homeland Security Removes Age Limits for ICE Recruits to Boost Hiring for Trump Deportations*, AP (Aug. 6, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/ice-immigration-trump-mass-deportations-border-249268f025baa6920fb4370e8e297049>.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ See e.g., Melissa Gira Grant, *DHS’s Neo-Nazi Memes Show the Agency for What It Is*, NEW REPUBLIC (Aug. 14, 2025), <https://newrepublic.com/article/199094/dhs-neo-nazi-memes-no-surprise>; Thomas Beaumont & Rebecca Santana, *ICE Airs Ads Stirring Up Local Frustration to Recruit Police for Mass Deportation Efforts*, AP (Oct. 6,

your culture,”¹⁷ while another states, “[y]ou took an oath to protect and serve, to keep your family, your city, safe... [b]ut in sanctuary cities, you’re ordered to stand down while dangerous illegals walk free.”¹⁸

ICE also has employed questionable methods to “poach” officers and deputies who work for local law enforcement, causing tension with local sheriffs.¹⁹ According to the sheriff in Polk County, Florida, ICE used an email list—provided by the sheriff to assist in enforcement efforts—to send recruitment emails. The move, according to the sheriff, was “unprofessional and unethical.”²⁰

The loosening of hiring standards and training requirements is unacceptable and will likely result in increased officer misconduct—similar to or worse than what occurred during a small surge in hiring U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers in the early 2000s.²¹ Exacerbating our concerns, DHS has gutted offices responsible for overseeing ICE officers and ensuring accountability for use-of-force incidents.²²

Given these developments, greater congressional oversight of ICE’s hiring is essential. To evaluate current hiring practices and assess the status of ICE’s expanding workforce, I ask that you provide the following information by November 4, 2025:

1. Records detailing any changes to ICE recruitment and training requirements within the past year, including language proficiency standards, duration of training, background check procedures, physical fitness benchmarks, and educational prerequisites.
2. Records outlining the current eligibility and qualification requirements for ICE law enforcement and related positions.
 - a. Records should include the process for vetting applicants, including social media records, to determine if they participated in the January 6, 2021, insurrection or

2025), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-mass-deportations-ice-immigration-ads-473a7ac193cff625476f1ee21f82facd>; Ja’han Jones, New Report Shows How Trump’s DHS is Mainstreaming White Supremacy, MSNBC (Sept. 2, 2025), <https://www.msnbc.com/top-stories/latest/homeland-security-social-media-white-supremacy-rcna228582>.

¹⁷ Michael Williams, *On Social Media, the Department of Homeland Security Appeals to Nostalgia—With Motifs of White Identity*, CNN (Aug. 13, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/08/13/politics/homeland-security-department-social-media>.

¹⁸ Thomas Beaumont & Rebecca Santana, *ICE Airs Ads Stirring Up Local Frustration to Recruit Police for Mass Deportation Efforts*, AP (Oct. 6, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-mass-deportations-ice-immigration-ads-473a7ac193cff625476f1ee21f82facd>.

¹⁹ Sam Levin, *US Sheriffs Decry White House Effort to Hire Away Local Law Enforcement for ICE*, THE GUARDIAN, (Sept. 4, 2025), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/04/trump-ice-immigration-hiring>.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Rebecca Santana, *ICE Entices New Recruits with Patriotism Pitch and Promise of \$50,000 Signing Bonuses*, AP (July 30, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/immigration-hiring-trump-border-mass-deportations-ed1580c3f5c0c2a2b5c1ebd621574365>.

²² Rebecca Santana, *Homeland Security Makes Cuts to Offices Overseeing Civil Rights Protections*, AP (Mar. 21, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/civil-rights-homeland-security-trump-immigration-0902c38dc7daf0a7960eb0d433c67f2f>; Gov’t Accountability Project, *DHS Halted 500+ Civil Rights Investigations When It Shut Down Oversight Office, Whistleblowers Say* (May 15, 2025), <https://whistleblower.org/press-release/dhs-halted-500-civil-rights-investigations-when-it-shut-down-oversight-office-whistleblowers-say/>.

are members of extremist groups such as white nationalist, neo-Nazi, anti-immigrant, anti-government, nihilistic, or other groups that advocate violent extremist ideologies.

3. A list of companies that have contracted to assist with hiring ICE employees, their role in the hiring process, and recruitment requirements used by the companies in the hiring process.
 - a. Please provide all contracts and any Performance Work Statement or Statement of Work related to hiring.
4. Records detailing the total funding ICE has allocated for recruitment, advertising, and retention initiatives during the last and current fiscal years, including any contracts with private marketing or public relations firms.
5. Records reflecting any new or revised recruitment campaigns, advertising strategies, or messaging materials—including social media content, digital ads, or print materials—used to attract potential ICE applicants.
6. Records identifying the current target demographics or geographic regions for ICE recruitment campaigns, including internal analyses or justifications for those targeting decisions.
7. Records detailing whether ICE has conducted risk assessments or internal reviews related to the potential for extremist affiliations or bias among recruits.
8. A list of all positions currently open within ICE, including the official title and number of vacancies for each position.
9. Records detailing changes in attrition rates among ICE law enforcement personnel in the past year and analyses, if any, explaining the causes of increased or decreased retention.
10. Records reflecting cash incentives provided to individuals hired in the past six months.
11. Records reflecting individuals hired by ICE who left training, resigned from their job at ICE, or otherwise cannot be accounted for by the agency.
12. Records reflecting each instance in which an applicant for a position was identified as a member of an extremist group (such as white nationalist, neo-Nazi, anti-immigrant, anti-government, nihilistic, or other groups that advocate violent extremist ideologies), private militia, or a participant in the January 6, 2021, insurrection, and whether that person was hired.
13. Records reflecting each instance when an applicant formerly worked for a non-federal law enforcement agency and the date they last worked for that agency.
 - a. Please include instances where the hired individual was cited or disciplined for misconduct in the previous law enforcement position.
14. Records outlining current mechanisms to monitor disciplinary actions, complaints, or misconduct involving newly hired personnel.
15. Records describing the current role of the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) and any other oversight offices in reviewing and adjudicating ICE misconduct allegations, and any changes to OPR's authorities, staffing, or procedures within the past year.

I look forward to your prompt response and attention to this important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dick Durbin", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Richard J. Durbin
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman, Senate Committee on the Judiciary