

From: **Ian Philabaum** <ian@innovationlawlab.org>

Date: Tue, Oct 24, 2023 at 8:00 AM

Subject: Request to Torrance County Commissioners in support of non-renewal of the ICE contract

To: <kmccall@tcnm.us>, <rschwebach@tcnm.us>, <sschropp@tcnm.us>, <jbarela@tcnm.us>

Cc: [Representatives of signatory organizations]

Dear Torrance County Commissioners,

We are a coalition of non-profit legal service providers, advocates, and community members who have, over the course of several years, met with thousands of immigrants, people seeking asylum, and long-time New Mexicans detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the Torrance County Detention Facility (TCDF).

We urge you as Torrance County Commissioners to vote not to renew the contract for civil immigration detention at TCDF when it expires in May 2024.

In support of our appeal, we also bring to your attention a few recent significant developments in and around the facility:

1. **ICE detention operations at TCDF continue to run in widespread violation of federal rules, with grave human impact.** In August, TCDF received [national attention](#) after a [federal oversight complaint](#) was filed containing the testimonies and reports of hundreds of people detained there, detailing ongoing due process and human rights violations. The [handwritten testimonies](#) of dozens of men detained at TCDF report repeated abuses at TCDF.
2. **The operators of TCDF face a growing number of lawsuits due to harms caused by practices at the facility**, including but not limited to a [wrongful death suit recently filed by the estate of Kesley Vial](#), another wrongful death suit by the estate of Jeremiah Camacho, and multiple complaints under the Federal Tort Claims Act filed in 2023.
3. **[The federal government continues to consider TCDF for ICE contract termination](#)**, given the ongoing failure to adequately staff the facility, and ongoing due process violations and human rights abuses.

We believe that the moral case for ending the ICE contract without delay is clear. ICE detention is not only cruel but also unnecessary, as outlined in a [June 2023 report for rural policymakers](#).

We support Torrance County's efforts to provide good, sustainable jobs for residents that do not involve detaining immigrants and people seeking safety and refuge in our country and generate the revenue necessary for the local community to thrive. Each year, CoreCivic — a private prison company based in Nashville, Tennessee — receives 25 million federal tax dollars to operate TCDF, much of which ends up in the pockets of out-of-state shareholders and executives. Even many of the staff who work at TCDF are from outside of Torrance County or even outside of New Mexico. Federal tax dollars would be better spent creating resilient jobs that employ residents of Torrance County and New Mexico, directly serve the needs of residents of Torrance County and New Mexico, and invest in Torrance County's beautiful communities, landscapes, and cultural heirlooms. We are eager to support you in pursuing any funding Torrance County would require for such a transition.

We would be happy to discuss these issues with you further as you prepare to deliberate on

contract renewal. We are eager to share with you about our work with those detained inside the facility, as well as to hear from you about the needs of the communities you represent, your vision for the county, and what efforts would best serve those needs.

If you would like to meet, please let us know by email or phone at the contact information below. We welcome further correspondence regarding the Commission's plans.

In conclusion, we reiterate our hope that you, as County Commissioners, vote for a more resilient economic future for Torrance County, one that isn't reliant on the whims of prison companies but is instead designed to meet the needs of your constituents and invest in the unique cultural and natural wonders of Torrance County.

Accordingly, we ask that you please vote no to renewing the ICE detention contract at TCDF in May 2024.

Thank you for your consideration.

New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
New Mexico Dream Team
Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center
American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico
Volunteers for Immigrants in Detention - Albuquerque
Santa Fe Dreamers Project
Innovation Law Lab
Detention Watch Network

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