



WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD

United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Submitted by:

Noelle Damico, Director of Social Justice

The Workers Circle

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Re: The Senate Judiciary Committee Oversight Hearing on March 3, 2026

Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Durbin, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

The Workers Circle is a national, secular Jewish social justice organization founded by Eastern European refugees who came to the United States fleeing autocracy and persecution and seeking democratic freedoms. That history drives our work today for an inclusive democracy and human equality.

We were present at the Senate Judiciary Committee's hearing where then-Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem, testified. The Workers Circle also flew families whose loved ones are being detained up to the hearing to listen and respond to the testimony they heard. Their own testimonies are below for inclusion in the Congressional record with ours.

On August 3, 2025, the Workers Circle initiated a weekly vigil outside of the Alligator Alcatraz detention center together with organizations of faith and conscience across south Florida that has gathered family members whose loved ones are being detained together with the wider public to denounce the inhumane abductions, detentions, deportations, and disappearances of our neighbors, family members, and friends. This vigil has catalyzed vigils across the country and through these actions we have seen first-hand the lawless, lethal cruelty that has targeted immigrants (and increasingly citizens) and we have walked with families through the unending anguish of as they desperately try to help their loved ones get medical care or access their lawyers while in detention, find care for children whose parents have been taken, and simply survive this trauma.

Here are but two of countless examples. Olga Janet Soto Chumpitaz, a U.S. Citizen, writes in grave fear about the health of her fiancée, Denis Cabrera, who is detained in Krome Detention Center in Miami.

Denis is a young Cuban photographer who entered the country on 2023 seeking asylum after the 11 July 2021 Cuban protests. Because of his participation he was detained by Cuban authorities, his work was confiscated, and he was severely beaten, losing most of his upper teeth. He was released in the U.S. with an I-220A order of release while pursuing his political asylum case. Meanwhile he had a work permit, social security number and a valid driver license.

He lives with Type 1 Diabetes and relied on an insulin pump to manage his condition, which was removed after he was detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. During nearly five months in detention he has suffered three serious hospitalizations, including one episode where potassium levels above 7 placed him at risk of heart attack. No follow-up has been provided.

Despite his life-threatening condition, his requests for humanitarian parole and bond have been denied, and an endocrinology appointment he waited two months for was canceled without explanation. His health continues to deteriorate while he remains in detention.

Julian Anthony Miranda, a U.S. Citizen, writes of his grandfather, Adalberto Finador Fuentes, and his autistic brother's disorientation and desperation on his grandfather's absence due to his detention in Alligator Alcatraz.

My name is Julian Miranda, my grandfather is currently within Alligator Alcatraz and has been held there since November 6, 2025. For months he has been unable to be with his family, whom he loves very much, in a country that he has loved ever since he came as a 10-year-old boy. He is a true American despite his mistakes, and this country is a melting pot for rehabilitation and second chances. He and many others currently suffer daily whether it is the poor portioning of food or their delays in receiving their medicine. He is the pinnacle of what men in this country should strive to be and he has built a wonderful life in this country with family he cares for. My brother, his grandson, is a person who has autism and barely speaks at all but one of the few things he asks for daily is for his grandfather Adalberto Finador Fuentes. Please release my grandfather as myself, his family and his friends miss him so much.

Immigrants who have become targets for this administration's terror are human beings beloved and part of our families, our neighborhoods, and our life together. The ICE operations, detentions, and deportations by the Trump administration are tearing our communities, nation, and Constitution apart. They are inhumane, immoral, and un-American.

We ask this Committee to take four actions: order a federal investigation into the Alligator Alcatraz detention facility; end the use of 287(g) agreements for federal immigration detention; restore the longstanding supervision and check-in system that allowed immigrants to remain in their communities and working while pursuing legal status; and hold the Trump administration accountable for the corruption and lawlessness driving its immigration detention machine.

I. Congress Must Order a Federal Investigation into Alligator Alcatraz

In December 2025, Amnesty International released findings from a September 2025 research mission documenting what it described as [cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, including some cases that rise to the level of torture, at "Alligator Alcatraz,"](#) the rapid-build detention center in the Florida Everglades. The report found that people detained there were held in conditions including overflowing toilets with fecal matter seeping into sleeping areas, lights on 24 hours a day, and severely limited access to showers. Detainees reported being shackled whenever outside their cages. Those placed in solitary confinement described guards punishing individuals by placing a person in a cage-like structure roughly two feet by two feet, where they were confined for hours at a time, pushed outside in the Florida sun and mosquitos, without water, and with hands, waist, and ankles shackled and nailed to the ground.

Most alarmingly, Amnesty International found that Alligator Alcatraz operates entirely outside federal oversight, with no registration or tracking systems equivalent to those used at ICE facilities. Families of detainees have consistently been unable to locate their loved ones. This constitutes, in Amnesty International's determination, enforced disappearance. That is not a term to be used lightly, and yet the evidence compels it. A [Miami Herald investigation found that over 800 people had vanished from Alligator Alcatraz;](#) literally dropping off the grid after being detained there in 2025. While some detainees at Alligator Alcatraz have now begun to be listed in the ICE database under the name "soft side facility" others remain missing.

The Workers Circle has heard from family members who could not learn whether their relatives were alive, what facility they were in, or whether they had access to a lawyer. This Committee should treat these accounts not as isolated complaints but as evidence of a deliberate system. As Amnesty International concluded, these conditions reflect "a pattern of deliberate neglect designed to dehumanize and punish those detained." A federal investigation is not only warranted, it is required.

II. End 287(g) Agreements for Federal Immigration Detention

The expansion of 287(g) agreements, which deputize state and local law enforcement to act as immigration agents, has resulted in wrongful arrests, racial profiling, and a climate of fear that prevents families from accessing schools, hospitals, and other essential services. Florida has become the nation's testing ground for this model, with the state increasing its immigrant detention population by more than 50 percent since January 2025 according to Amnesty International's report. In January 2026, Governor Ron DeSantis himself touted that [Florida had arrested over 20,000 immigrants and deported 3,000](#). Disturbingly, Alligator Alcatraz is a blueprint for states to unlawfully use 287g agreements to assert independent state control over detention facilities. Now new facilities including "[Speedway Slammer](#)" in Miami, Indiana and "[Cornhusker Clink](#)" in McCook, Nebraska are expanding this dangerous model that has allowed Florida to evade federal standards for detention including being held without charge, not having bond determinations, or even being able to meet with their attorneys. The [ACLU filed suit against Florida's use of a 287g agreement](#) to create this new and dangerous model of detention.

These 287g "partnerships" are not a lawful substitute for proper federal immigration enforcement. They blur the line between local policing and federal civil enforcement, and they sweep up individuals with deep community ties, pending asylum claims, and valid work authorizations. The Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Center has documented how individuals with longstanding orders of supervision, who have been checking in with ICE regularly for years, sometimes decades, are now being re-detained at those very check-ins, with no new evidence of wrongdoing and no meaningful opportunity to contest their detention. This betrayal of trust has shattered communities and undermined the integrity of the legal process itself. Congress must act to end this practice.

III. Restore the Supervision and Check-In System That Worked

For decades, ICE operated under a system in which individuals with final orders of removal, pending asylum claims, or work authorization were released under orders of supervision and required to check in regularly with immigration authorities. This was not a loophole or a failure of enforcement, it was a deliberate, workable policy that allowed immigration courts to process cases, that kept families intact, and that permitted people to work and contribute to their communities while their legal status was being determined.

That system is now being dismantled. The current administration has revoked orders of supervision at check-ins, *detaining people who have been complying with the law for years*. The [RFK Human Rights Center's practice advisory on challenging these revocations through habeas corpus](#) makes clear that this practice is legally dubious, and practically devastating. People are not being swept up because they pose a danger or a flight risk. They are being swept up because mass detention has become an end in itself. It is undermining not only the Constitutional rights of immigrants but the Constitutional rights of us all.

We call on Congress to codify the supervision and check-in framework, to restore bond hearings for those detained, and to ensure that immigration enforcement reflects the actual risks presented by individuals, not the political imperatives of an administration that views detention as a sadistic spectacle.

IV. Investigate the No-Bid Contracting Corruption at Alligator Alcatraz

The financial story of Alligator Alcatraz is one of waste, opacity, and political patronage. Among the most striking examples: a single portable toilet company called Doodie Calls received more than \$92 million in state payments for waste removal services. Meanwhile, the conditions inside the facility, the very conditions Amnesty International documented as torturous, have not been remedied. Taxpayers are paying inflated prices to support a facility where toilets overflow and people are denied showers. This is not immigration enforcement. This is a transfer of public funds to political allies, at the expense of both taxpayers and human beings in custody. Congress must demand a full audit and accountability.

V. End the Criminalization of Immigration and Restore the Rule of Law

The criminalization of immigration is not a neutral enforcement posture. It is a choice, and it is a choice with a history that our community knows well from other times and places in history. But you don't need to be Jewish to see this is wrong. The Trump administration is violently dragging people from their homes, workplaces, schools and streets, detaining people without bond, restricting access to legal counsel, and operating facilities that exist outside federal oversight. These are not the hallmarks of a nation governed by law. They are the hallmarks of a system designed to punish and deter, regardless of the legal rights or human dignity of those affected.

Please find below the testimonies of family members who currently have loved ones detained. We encourage you to read about their first-hand

experience with the terror and trauma the Trump administration's DHS policies.

We urge this Committee to use every legislative tool at its disposal: investigate human rights abuses at Alligator Alcatraz and other detention centers, restore bond hearings, mandate legal access in all immigration detention facilities, end the use of state-run detention sites that operate outside federal standards, and defund no-bid emergency contracting for immigration enforcement. Most fundamentally, we ask you to reaffirm what this country has always, at its best, believed: that immigrants are not criminals, and that the law must apply equally to everyone, including the government.

Respectfully submitted,



Noelle Damico, Director of Social Justice
The Workers Circle

Request for Congressional Oversight and Investigation into Human Rights Violations at the Detention Facility Known as “Alligator Alcatraz” and all ICE detention centers in current operation:

Dear Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Arianne Betancourt, and I appear before you today as a United States citizen and the oldest daughter of a man who has endured severe abuse while detained at the facility commonly referred to as “Alligator Alcatraz.” I am also speaking as an advocate who has been working closely with families across the country whose loved ones are experiencing similar treatment. I am currently holding the position of community catalyst of south Florida for The Workers Circle. The Workers Circle is a national, secular, Jewish social justice organization founded by Eastern European refugees who came to the United States fleeing pogroms and persecution, and seeking democratic freedoms at the turn of the 20th century. That history drives our work for an inclusive democracy and human equality today.

My father Justo Oney Betancourt Rodriguez is the parent of three American children. His detention has not only subjected him to cruel and degrading treatment, but it has also inflicted profound emotional and psychological harm on his children, who are forced to witness their father suffer under conditions that violate the values this country claims to uphold.

During his detention, my father has been shackled to hospital beds, denied consistent access to his prescribed medications, and repeatedly transferred between detention facilities in ways that disrupted his medical care. These actions placed his health and safety in serious jeopardy and demonstrate a troubling disregard for basic medical and humanitarian standards.

He has described conditions where detainees are provided rotten, frozen, or insufficient food, leaving many hungry and weakened. Detainees have been denied access to clean drinking water and have gone extended periods without showers or basic sanitation. These conditions are degrading and incompatible with even the most minimal standards for humane detention.

My father also reported violent coercion by authorities. After refusing to cross into Mexico, he was forced to do so at gunpoint. The use of armed threats to compel a detainee to cross an international border raises grave legal and constitutional concerns and demands immediate investigation.

Inside detention, my father witnessed others suffer severe medical crises and even die in front of him, while adequate care was delayed or denied. These events have left

lasting trauma not only for those detained but also for the families who hear these accounts and fear the worst for their loved ones.

The suffering extends far beyond one individual case. Because of what happened to my father, I made the difficult decision to leave my job and dedicate myself entirely to advocacy. I have been working full-time to connect with families of detainees across the country, documenting their experiences and building a record of what is happening inside these facilities.

Through this work, I have compiled the names and testimonies of other detainees who have experienced the same inhumane conditions—including denial of medical care, deprivation of adequate food and water, coercion, degrading treatment, and dangerous transfers between facilities.

These accounts reveal a pattern of systemic abuse, not isolated incidents. The practices being described are incompatible with American constitutional protections, basic due process, and internationally recognized human rights standards.

The United States cannot claim to stand for liberty, justice, and human dignity while allowing conditions like these to persist inside its detention system.

For the sake of my father, his three American children and his granddaughter, and the many other families who are suffering in silence, I respectfully urge Congress to take the following actions:

1. Launch an immediate and independent investigation into detention conditions at the facility known as “Alligator Alcatraz” and other detention centers across the country.
2. Investigate allegations of excessive force, coercion, and forced cross-border movement, including the use of weapons to intimidate detainees.
3. Ensure detainees have guaranteed access to medical care, medications, clean water, adequate nutrition, and humane living conditions.
4. Demand full transparency regarding detainee transfers, deaths in custody, and the denial of medical treatment.
5. Establish meaningful oversight and accountability mechanisms to ensure that constitutional rights and human dignity are protected within the immigration detention system.

The conditions being reported do not reflect the values of a democratic society governed by the rule of law. They reflect a system in urgent need of transparency, accountability, and reform.

No child should have to watch their parent suffer in these conditions. No family should be forced to fight simply to ensure that their loved one is treated with basic human dignity.

I urge Congress to act swiftly to investigate these abuses and ensure that the rights and humanity of every person in U.S. custody are protected.

Congress appropriates tens of billions of taxpayer dollars each year to the United States Department of Homeland Security, including billions specifically designated for immigration enforcement through U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement . With a budget of this magnitude, it is indefensible that individuals in federal custody are reporting rotten or insufficient food, lack of clean drinking water, denial of basic medical care, and unsanitary conditions. When an agency entrusted with such vast public resources cannot provide detainees with the most fundamental necessities required for human survival, it raises serious questions not only about operational failures but also about oversight and accountability. Taxpayers are funding a system that claims to ensure safety and lawful enforcement, yet detainees are describing conditions that fall far below basic humanitarian standards. If billions of dollars cannot secure adequate food, clean water, and medical care for people held in government custody, Congress must ask where those funds are going and why meaningful oversight has failed to prevent these conditions.

I did not expect that advocating for my father's basic humanity would become my life's work, but the conditions he has endured forced me to make that choice. I left my job to devote myself fully to documenting these abuses, connecting with other families, and ensuring that the stories of detainees do not remain hidden behind the walls of detention facilities. What I have learned from speaking with family after family is that my father's experience is not unique.

Across the country, people in government custody are enduring conditions that violate basic human dignity and contradict the constitutional values that define this nation. The United States has long claimed to stand for justice, accountability, and the protection of human rights. Those principles must apply even—especially—when the government holds power over vulnerable individuals in its custody. I ask Congress to recognize the suffering of my father, the trauma experienced by his three American children, and the countless other families affected by these practices, and to take meaningful action to ensure that no one held in the custody of our government is subjected to cruelty, neglect, or abuse ever again.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Respectfully,
Arianne Betancourt
Miami,FL
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Congressional Oversight Request: Human Rights Violations at ICE Detention Facilities, Including "Alligator Alcatraz"

Dear Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee,

As an American citizen and daughter of an immigrant who is currently detained at Florida Soft Side South otherwise known as Alligator Alcatraz. My father came to this country many years ago with a dream. Unfortunately, he made a mistake in the 90's that would cause him to have a removal ordered for March of 2007. Before my father's release in 2007 he spent 6 months detained in immigration. Immigration could not remove him because Cuba the country he was born in is a communist country. His removal order states that he can only be deported to his country once his country is no longer communist.

My father is a 65-year-old man who has lived in this country since he was 10 years old. He came to this country legally on a freedom flight. My father since his release from prison has made it a priority to live his life lawfully for his grandchildren and myself. Since his release from federal prison over 20 years ago my father has never committed a crime.

My father Adalberto Fiandor Fuentes has been at Florida Soft Side South since November 6 th, 2025. He was detained during an ICE check-in, since his release he has never missed a single check-in. He was never informed that he had an option to self deport they just simply detained him for doing what immigration had asked of him. That in and of itself was a betrayal. The lack of humanity and lack of dignity he has witnessed has been extremely upsetting to our entire family, but most importantly to him and all the others that have been detained. I was born in this country, and I can say that I have never in my life seen such horrifying things happening in our country, especially when it comes to immigration.

The individuals detained in the facility known as "Alligator Alcatraz" are not abstractions — they are human beings entitled to dignity, lawful treatment, and due process. The conditions they face are not merely uncomfortable; they raise serious concerns about safety, medical care, and compliance with federal detention standards. Many detainees report inadequate access to legal counsel, prolonged isolation, and practices that fall short of constitutional protections. This hearing is not only about the legality of their confinement, but about whether our institutions will uphold the basic principles of justice.

No person in the custody of the United States should be subjected to conditions that endanger their health, silence their rights, or strip them of their humanity. The Court has both the authority and the responsibility to ensure that these violations are addressed and that every individual held in this facility receives the lawful, humane treatment guaranteed under our Constitution. The immigrants detained in the facility known as “Alligator Alcatraz” are living under conditions that would be unacceptable in any lawful system of detention. Reports of overcrowding, inadequate medical care, and restricted access to counsel point to systemic failures that undermine the integrity of due process itself.

These individuals are not criminals; many are asylum seekers, parents, workers, and long-time residents who came to this country seeking safety. Instead, they have been placed in an environment that isolates them, endangers them, and obstructs their ability to exercise their legal rights. The question before this Court is simple: will we allow a detention regime that violates the standards we claim to uphold, or will we intervene to protect the fundamental rights of those in our custody? Justice requires the latter.

The United States has long claimed to stand for fairness and compassion. Yet inside this facility, those values are not reflected. The individuals detained there are not asking for special treatment — only for the basic rights and humane conditions that our laws already promise. This Court has the power to affirm that their lives matter, that their rights matter, and that justice applies to them as fully as it applies to anyone else.

Respectfully,

Michele Miranda