Dear [insert name],

My name is [insert your name] and I am contacting you on behalf of Allies to End Detention, a grassroots group that advocates on behalf of people in migrant detention centers. [OR insert personal or professional connection with the person you are contacting here].

We appreciate the hard work [insert name] is already doing for the migrant populations in San Diego. Allies to End Detention are extremely concerned about our friends at Otay Mesa Detention Center (OMDC). We know from recent news media that there are at least 16 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among detainees, and several confirmed cases among employees. Due to the lack of transparency from ICE and CoreCivic, we fear the numbers are much greater.

**Dangerous Conditions**

Detainees are increasingly vulnerable to COVID-19. ICE insists that they are implementing physical distancing, but it is our position that this is impossible in a detention facility. At OMDC, individuals sleep in massive dormitories with dozens of others. Previously, outbreaks of other contagious diseases have spread aggressively in immigration detention facilities, including in CoreCivic-operated facilities in California. We are receiving reports from inside that it continues to be “business as usual,” and that individuals are being “herded” even when someone has COVID-19 symptoms. ICE insists they are also providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to detainees and has a plan for providing medical care. However, our friends on the inside have told us that staff and guards at OMDC are not providing adequate PPE, sanitizing materials, nor administering medical assistance when required. For these reasons, people have a better chance to survive outside of detention centers, even if already exposed to COVID-19.

We have heard that people detained in OMDC are hunger striking for humanitarian releases and for access to PPE. On Friday, April 10, the organization Pueblo Sin Fronteras shared audio testimony from a detained woman that detainees were pepper-sprayed for demanding PPE and other prevention measures.

The assistant director of ICE field operations has sent a memo directing a review for release of pregnant detainees, people who gave birth within the past two weeks, people over the age of 60, and people with compromised immune systems. However, we do not know if this review had been completed, how many people were found eligible, or when individuals will be released. We do not have much faith in the process, given that ICE only released a fraction (150 out of 550 people) of those who were found to meet earlier vulnerability criteria in March. Further, the *LA Times* reports that ICE is keeping exposed detainees in a “cohort,” quarantined as a group until everyone is symptom free for 14 days. It is unclear when and if they will release cohorts who have been exposed, even if they meet criteria of vulnerability.

ICE Field Directors have the power to unilaterally release everyone in custody right now, starting with those who are most vulnerable to serious complications and death from COVID-19. The fact that they have not done so yet, putting hundreds of people at risk of illness and risking death, is unconscionable. We are asking for your help in putting pressure on ICE to save lives.

Please email or call to:

Gregory J. Archambeault

[gregory.archambeault@dhs.gov](mailto:gregory.archambeault@dhs.gov)

(619) 557-611

Governor Gavin Newsom

Phone: (916) 445-2841

Email form: https://govapps.gov.ca.gov/gov40mail/