

United States Senate

September 18, 2020

Hon. Joseph V. Cuffari
Inspector General
Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528-0305

Dear Mr. Cuffari:

The Department of Homeland Security's Office of the Inspector General should expeditiously conduct a thorough investigation into a whistleblower complaint alleging forced hysterectomies and other egregious abuses at the Irwin County Detention Center (ICDC) in Ocilla, Georgia. LaSalle Corrections operates that facility for the federal government, including for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The alleged abuses detailed in the complaint and in related reports must be thoroughly and swiftly investigated to protect the rights and safety of women and patients in our nation's care.

The whistleblower expressed alarm about the "rate at which the hysterectomies have occurred" at the facility. Specifically, the complaint alleges that between October and December 2019 at least five women detained at the ICDC received hysterectomies. When asked about the procedures, however, the women "reacted confused when explaining why they had one done." The complaint also describes how a gynecologist once removed the wrong ovary on a young woman, causing her "to go back to take out the left and she wound up with a total hysterectomy," leaving her unable to bear children.

Another detained woman who received a hysterectomy recounted that medical personnel "did not properly explain to her what procedure she was going to have done." Although she asked for more information about why she was receiving a hysterectomy, she was "given three different responses by three different individuals." When the woman told a nurse that the procedure "isn't for me," the nurse "responded by getting angry and agitated."

Forced sterilizations infringe on reproductive rights and autonomy. To understand whether such violations may have been committed against immigrants in our federal government's custody, the Inspector General's Office should immediately investigate the reproductive health policies and practices at the ICDC and at other

ICE facilities, including but not limited to, all instances of forced, coerced, or medically unnecessary hysterectomies.

In addition to thoroughly investigating the recent alleged abuses at the ICDC, we urge you to immediately conduct a national review of reproductive health policies and practices at ICE facilities to ensure that the human rights of women in federal immigration custody are assured.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss compliance with this request, please contact Kara Lynum with Senator Feinstein's Judiciary Committee staff at (202) 224-7703, Rajiv Venkataramanan with Senator Leahy's Judiciary Committee staff at (202) 224-3466, Danny Smith with Senator Booker's Judiciary Committee staff at (202) 224-7842, Jaron Goddard with Senator Murray's office at (202) 224-6935, or Julia Sferlazzo with Senator Casey's office at (202) 224-4195.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator

/s/

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

/s/

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

/s/
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/
Tom Udall
United States Senator

/s/
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/
Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

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Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

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Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

/s/
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

/s/
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

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Tina Smith
United States Senator

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Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

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Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

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Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

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Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

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Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

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Robert Menendez
United States Senator

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Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

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Ron Wyden
United States Senator

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Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

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Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

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Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

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Jack Reed
United States Senator

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Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

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Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

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Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

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Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator