



SISTERS OF BON SECOURS USA

May 26, 2020

Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security
Office of the Executive Secretary
MS 0525
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20528-0525

Dear Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf,

We, the Sisters of Bon Secours USA, are Catholic Sisters who have ministered in health care in the United States since 1881. We have a long history of caring for people who are poor and vulnerable and at this time of pandemic, we especially care about the health of our immigrant brothers and sisters. As the coronavirus continues to spread, we are gravely concerned for the wellbeing of the tens of thousands of people in immigration detention facilities who are at high risk of contracting the disease.

That is why we are asking you to heed the pleas of public health experts, elected officials, and people across the US to use your authority to urgently release people from immigration detention facilities, starting with people in high-risk categories, including people over age 60, pregnant people, and those with pre-existing conditions or compromised immune systems.

Earlier this month, we received the tragic news that a 57-year-old Salvadoran man became the first person to die after contracting the coronavirus in an immigration detention facility. One death in ICE custody is too many. Yet a recent study estimated that without action, between 72 to nearly 100 percent of people in immigration detention facilities under your watch could contract the virus.

The release of detained immigrants and asylum seekers would be both safe and manageable. Many detained immigrants are longtime residents of the US who were taken from established lives in this country, and many others, including asylum seekers, have close ties to family, faith, and other community members who would house them. There are many community and faith-based organizations ready and able to assist immigrants and asylum seekers who lack such existing support networks.

As Women of Healing, we ask you to please do everything in your power to release these immigrants, to provide COVID-19 testing for them and safe places for a 14 day quarantine period before they join their families. All of these actions will ensure that more lives are not unnecessarily lost due to this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Sister Elaine Davia, CBS
Sisters of Bon Secours USA
Area Leader