

THE GENDER EQUITY COALITION

February 13, 2026

Dear Members of Congress:

We, **The Gender Equity Coalition (GEC)**, a combined 120 organizations committed to advancing gender justice, defending human rights, and ensuring that everyone can live free from fear and state violence, are horrified by the escalating violence being inflicted on our communities by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents. We write to demand that Congress use its full power of the purse and oversight authority—through appropriations, investigations, and enforceable restrictions—to immediately halt these unconstitutional abuses and end the terror being inflicted on our communities.

We mourn the lives of Alex Pretti, a nurse who dedicated his life to caring for veterans; we mourn Renee Nicole Good, a mother, wife, and poet; we mourn Keith Porter Jr., a father of two, who was killed while celebrating the new year with loved ones; we mourn all of those who have died in ICE custody over the past year; and we mourn the countless children and families the Trump administration has terrified, injured, abducted, and/or traumatized. We are horrified by the treatment of Liam Ramos, the five-year-old boy in the bunny hat used as bait and taken from his home, who is one of the more than [3,800 children](#) who have been held in detention during the second Trump administration. These incidents are not isolated; they reflect a broader pattern of militarized enforcement, retaliatory raids, and deliberate family separation that is chilling access to schools, healthcare, and safety services across the country.

The cruelty and scale of the violence is inherently anti-family and anti-American. As a coalition of gender justice organizations, we see how women are disproportionately harmed by ICE and CBP enforcement—as caregivers, mothers, and frontline providers of child care and healthcare. We also see how children within the community at-large are living with constant trauma, and immigrant families are pushed into impossible choices between safety, survival, and their most basic rights and services. Immigration enforcement operates as a gendered system of punishment, targeting caregivers, destabilizing women-dominated care workforces, and trapping survivors in violence by making safety pathways feel dangerous. Below are just a few key ways in which women and children are being adversely impacted by the actions of ICE and CBP:

- **Pregnant, postpartum, and lactating individuals are at greater risk.** Despite ICE directives advising against the detention of pregnant or postpartum people, these individuals continue to be held in facilities with substandard conditions, medical neglect, and abuse. Nursing parents are separated from their infants, and prenatal and postpartum care is routinely denied, threatening the health and safety of both parents and children long-term.
- **Targeting of immigrants is preventing access to care and wellness.** Many immigrants, including those with lawful status, are avoiding hospitals, clinics, grocery stores, and

social services because they fear encountering ICE. Families are skipping prenatal care, vaccinations, screenings, and even emergency medical treatment for both parents and children. Additionally, immigrants comprise 28% of the direct care workforce, with the vast majority being women. Fear of being targeted and racially profiled by ICE is preventing many care workers, regardless of immigration status, from coming to work and tens of thousands of care workers are losing their lawful status because of Trump administration policies.

- **Schools and child care centers, once safe havens, have become sites of trauma.** The rescission of sensitive location protections has exposed children, parents, caregivers, and educators to raids, intimidation, and surveillance. For decades, sensitive location protections reflected a basic principle: children should be able to learn, and families should be able to seek care, without fear of enforcement. Families are now forced to choose between risking deportation by sending children to school or keeping them home and denying them education. Attendance is plummeting, children are emotionally withdrawing, and trust between schools and communities is fractured. Non-immigrant children are panicked about the impact of raids on their friends, and numerous schools across the nation have gone into lockdown because of ICE presence nearby. In Minneapolis, there are reports of schools going to online learning due to fears of parents and caregivers, drops in attendance as much as 50%, and reports of ICE using chemical agents near and around schools and child care centers. Child care providers—predominantly women—are also being deeply impacted. One in five child care workers in the United States is an immigrant, and many now face threats, harassment, and federal investigations, disrupting critical early education programs that support working families.
- **Immigrant survivors are silenced.** The current climate of militarized immigration enforcement has pushed immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes further into the shadows, rendering hollow any claim that ICE and CBP enforcement promotes public safety. Fear of arrest, detention, or deportation prevents survivors from contacting law enforcement or accessing social services, increasing their risk of harm and eroding trust in systems meant to provide protection. Even survivors who are legally eligible for protections, including self-petitions under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) or U visas, are often too afraid to come forward, unsure whether seeking help will put them or their families in danger. At the same time, cruel anti-refugee policies are putting the lives of LGBTQI+ people fleeing violence and persecution at grave risk. Conditions in immigration detention—marked by inadequate medical care, abusive practices, and documented sexual assault—compound these harms, leaving survivors less safe, less supported, and more vulnerable.
- **The mental health, economic, and long-term harms are profound.** Children and families experience chronic stress, anxiety, and depression, which can persist for years and affect education, social development, and overall well-being. Women, caregivers, and survivors

face compounded trauma intensified by detention, family separation, and denial of essential care. Fear of enforcement also pushes women out of the workforce, reducing household income, limiting access to benefits, and destabilizing critical care and education services that communities rely on. The resulting toxic stress has lifelong consequences for children's health, learning, and stability—costs that communities and public systems will carry for years.

Moreover, these harms have been paid for with our tax dollars. It's unconscionable that funding has been diverted from Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other essential programs that allow families to thrive in order to finance human rights abuses—spreading fear, separating families, and terrorizing children and immigrants who are essential to our families, the care workforce, and our communities.

We call on Congress to demand:

1. An end to ICE/CBP surge deployments nationwide.
2. Halt ICE and CBP funding until enforceable restrictions conditioned on compliance with civil rights, medical standards, and due process are in place.
3. Immediate policy changes that stop abuse on the ground, including restoring sensitive locations protections, ending tactics that target pregnant and postpartum people, children and caregivers, and ensuring access to counsel and medical care.

Additionally, Congress should claw back the more than \$170 billion in Department of Homeland Security funds from H.R. 1 and reverse the cuts made to healthcare, SNAP, child care, housing and public education, which are driving up costs for families. Our nation needs a safe immigration process that balances compassion and security, not cuts to healthcare and other programs for families, and not cruelty or violence.

At this moment of profound crisis, Congress must choose whether to do its job to restore safety and dignity to our communities or to allow fear, impunity, and state-sactioned violence to become the norm. This issue should not be partisan. The lives of women, children, and families are on the line, and there is no more time to wait.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Members of the Gender Equity Coalition:

ACCESS REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

All Above All*

Alliance for Girls

American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
Arkansas Black Gay Men's Forum
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
Care in Action
Caring Across Generations
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Court Accountability Action
End Rape On Campus
Equal Rights Advocates
Esperanza United
Family Values @ Work
Feminist Majority
Gender Liberation Movement
Girls for Gender Equity
Gutmacher Institute
Higher Heights for America
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
Institute for Women's Policy Research
Justice and Joy National Collaborative
Justice for Migrant Women
Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense & Education Fund
me too. International
MomsRising
Monsoon Asians & Pacific Islanders in Solidarity
National Abortion Federation
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation/Black Women's Roundtable
National Council of Jewish Women
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Network To End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women
National Organization of API Ending Sexual Violence
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National Women's Law Center
National Women's Political Caucus
Paid Leave for All Action
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Action Fund
Power to Decide
Pregnancy Justice
Reproductive Freedom for All
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA)

Survivors Know
Tahirih Justice Center
Trans Empowerment Project
True North Research
UltraViolet
Women's March

Additional Undersigned Organizations and Movement Allies:

Abortion Forward
Alachua County FL Commission
American Atheists
ASISTA Immigration Assistance
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Beyond Survival
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS)
Children's Health Committee, Physicians for Human Rights Student Advisory Board
Health Students Taking Action Together (H-STAT)
Her Justice
Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence
LEAD Filipino
Levine Center To End Hate, Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester
Local Progress Women's Caucus
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Network of Abortion Funds
Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association (NAAPIMHA)
National Health Law Program
NHeLP
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Pacific Asian Counseling Services
Sadhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus
Sakhi for South Asian Survivors
Sembrando Lab
Survivor Justice Center
The Advocates for Human Rights
URGE Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity
ValorUS
Violence Free Minnesota
Washington State Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence