

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 16, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem:

I write to express grave concern regarding the decision by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to furlough federal workers tasked with oversight of detention centers during the ongoing government shutdown.

DHS has been recognized as essential to national operations, continuing its core functions even as other agencies face widespread furloughs. According to DHS's own shutdown plan, only about eight percent of its employees have been placed on furlough. ¹ DHS is in this unique position because it received nearly \$170 billion in funding earlier this year for immigration and border operation resources that were allocated to the agency by Congress through H.R.1. ²

However, among that small percentage is the Office of Detention Oversight (ODO), which has been entirely furloughed.³ This office is not peripheral; it is the department's primary safeguard against abuse and neglect in immigration detention centers. ODO's inspectors are responsible for ensuring that facilities meet federal health, safety, and humane treatment standards, a mission that directly affects more than 60,000 individuals currently held in immigration detention across government-run and privately operated facilities nationwide.⁴ In Fiscal Year 2024 alone, ODO conducted oversight inspections in more than 78 detention facilities under DHS authority. ⁵ With detention levels now among the highest in more than a decade, suspending this critical oversight function while enforcement operations proceed uninterrupted is indefensible and represents a profound failure of priorities. ⁶

What's particularly troubling is that the announcement of the ODO furlough came through a statement from DHS's press office, which based on media activity, does not appear to have furloughed any of its staff. The fact that the department's communications team remains fully operational while the office tasked with upholding humane treatment standards has "gone dark" raises serious questions about the Department's priorities during this shutdown.

To ensure accountability and transparency, I request written responses to the following by October 30, 2025:

1. What is the breakdown of furloughed employees by agency within DHS?
2. What factors led DHS to deem the press and communications staff essential, but not the Office of Detention Oversight?

¹ [DHS Procedures Relating to a Lapse in Appropriations \(September 2025\)](#)

² [ICE prepares detention blitz with historic funding from Trump bill - The Washington Post- July 2025](#)

³ [ICE closes Office of Detention Oversight, citing government shutdown - The Washington Post- October 2025](#)

⁴ [ICE Detentions Hit Record Under Trump Admin, 70% Lack Convictions Latest Data Shows - Newsweek- August 2025](#)

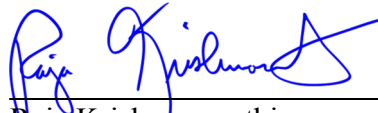
⁵ [Immigration Detention- DHS Should Define Goals and Measures to Assess Facility Inspection Programs- GAO- May 2025](#)

⁶ [As Money Rushed In, ICE's Rapid Expansion Stalled Out - The Atlantic- October 2025](#)

3. Who, if anyone, is currently conducting oversight or inspections of detention facilities during the shutdown?

Oversight and transparency are not optional; they are essential for maintaining public trust in the U.S. government, particularly at a time when that trust is historically low, and for ensuring the humane treatment of every person in federal custody. I look forward to your prompt and comprehensive response.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress