



Council of the District of Columbia

John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Brianne K. Nadeau
Councilmember, Ward 1

Chairperson
Human Services Committee

September 20, 2018

Committee Member
Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization
Government Operations
Health

Russell Hott
Washington Field Office Director
U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement
Washington Field Office
2675 Prosperity Avenue
3rd Floor
Fairfax, VA 20958-5219

Dear Director Hott,

Recent raids and the continuing threat of more sweeping actions by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) operating in the District of Columbia have posed significant legal and public safety concerns for District residents. Since 2017, there have been dozens of Washingtonians detained, arrested and forcefully removed from this city. As a councilmember for the District of Columbia representing Ward 1, which is often a target of your operations, I along with all of my colleagues on the Council, feel compelled to respond to actions taken by ICE and request the immediate return of all detained Washingtonians.

It is our duty and responsibility to protect residents from threats to their safety and preserve the harmony of our government functions and rule of law. As duly elected government officials, we cannot abide your agency’s disrespect and disregard for our laws and the ongoing harm your agency’s actions inflict upon the people we are sworn to serve.

In July 2018, there were reports of ICE activity in the Ward 1 neighborhood of Columbia Heights where an apartment building was raided by ICE agents with the intention of arresting specific individuals. When those individuals could not be found, ICE agents then seized bystanders suspected of being undocumented as they returned home from work. It was later reported these operations were part of Operation Eagle Shield which raided places in the District, Maryland and Virginia and lead to the arrest of 131 men and 1 woman. At least twelve of these individuals are D.C. residents. Only 37 of those arrested were charged with a crime. What was the basis for arresting 132 people? Were any of those detained or arrested named in a valid judicial warrant?

The ICE operations in the District beg the question of how so many residents not listed in a warrant were detained by ICE. Their detention and arrest by your agents bear the ugly taint of racial profiling, which is not only wrong, it is unconstitutional. People should be able to walk the streets or enter their home without fear that they will be stopped and asked to show their papers. These bystanders were not the targets of any warrant, merely collateral victims. We ask that your agents cease racially profiling people in the District and return all detained Washingtonians in

your custody immediately. As councilmembers, we respect our criminal laws, however, regardless of their status, all Washingtonians have a right to defend themselves in court. An arrest does not equal guilt, and in this country, we still have the presumption of innocence until proven guilty.

This practice of arresting undocumented people without judicial warrants makes our community less safe, not more. There have been reports of ICE agents impersonating our local police, which is not only a crime, but leads to an erosion of trust in our Metropolitan Police Department (“MPD”) and diminishes the health and safety of our residents. People are less likely to call MPD when they witness or are the victim of a crime for fear that it could lead to their removal or removal of an undocumented family member, neighbor or friend. It makes it more difficult for MPD to respond to crime in the community due to the fear you have created, and it makes undocumented residents even more vulnerable to attacks from bad actors who know that their victims will be unwilling to seek help from law enforcement or assist in an investigation. People, regardless of their status, should be able to trust that MPD is there to protect them from harm.

It is increasingly obvious that the Trump administration and this agency’s only intention is to target non-white people who come to this country for a better life. Coming to this country for a better life is the story of nearly all Americans. Washingtonians are not interested in divisive politics of criminalizing undocumented residents. We do not believe that the pillars of our justice system should be circumvented by the arrival of an ICE agent who will remove people without full due process of law.

While most of the ICE activity has happened in Ward 1, all members of Council support this request to end racial profiling in our communities and for the return of our residents. As an elected legislative body, we are all sworn to protect and represent the District and its people – all of them. A pain felt in one part of the District is felt by all.

We often invite people to experience the community, beauty and rich diversity that is DC. My fellow members of the Council and I must now respectfully request that you cease and desist all activities in our city. Your actions have broken the public trust, threatened our safety and terrorized our residents. ICE agents must promptly identify themselves and present complete, valid warrants signed by a judge. Regardless of who occupies the White House, the Constitution still applies.

Sincerely,



Brianne K. Nadeau
Councilmember, Ward 1



Phil Mendelson
Chairman



Kenyan McDuffie
Councilmember, Ward 5



David Grosso
Councilmember, At-Large



Mary M. Chen
Councilmember, Ward 3



Robert White, Jr.
Councilmember, At-Large



Trayon White, Sr.
Councilmember, Ward 8



Elissa Silverman
Councilmember, At-Large



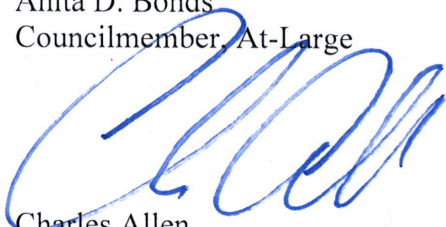
Jack Evans
Councilmember, Ward 2



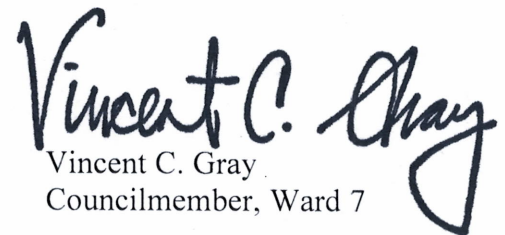
Anita D. Bonds
Councilmember, At-Large



Brandon T. Todd
Councilmember, Ward 4



Charles Allen
Councilmember, Ward 6



Vincent C. Gray
Councilmember, Ward 7

CC:

Mayor Muriel Bowser

Acting ICE Director Ronald D. Vitiello

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Neilson

U.S. Attorney General Jefferson B. Sessions, III