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Subcommittee on Defense

**Congress of the United
States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

October 29, 2026

The Honorable David J. Venturella
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20536

Acting Director Venturella:

I write to express my serious concerns regarding U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) plans to spend approximately \$17 million in taxpayer dollars to expand the Buffalo Federal Detention Facility in Batavia, New York, including the construction of a temporary structure intended to house up to 100 women.

Documents released by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have provided conflicting descriptions of the proposed structure, alternatively referring to it as a "soft-sided" or "hard-sided" facility. It remains unclear whether the expansion will consist of tents, trailers, or another temporary structure, how it will withstand Western New York's harsh winters, and whether adequate infrastructure and staffing will be in place before additional detainees arrive. Congress and the American people deserve a complete accounting of how these funds are being spent.

I am equally concerned by ICE's decision to proceed with this expansion despite documented shortcomings in medical care at Batavia. A June 2025 DHS Office of Inspector General report identified medical staffing vacancies that resulted in delays in care. Introducing up to 100 women, including potentially pregnant women and nursing mothers, raises serious questions about access to specialized medical services, appropriate staffing, safe housing arrangements, and family and legal visitation.

Earlier this year, I visited Batavia to meet with a Rochester constituent detained at the facility. That experience reinforced my concerns about the consequences of prolonged immigration detention for individuals and their families. ICE has an obligation to ensure that every individual in its custody is treated humanely, receives necessary medical care, and maintains timely, meaningful access to legal representation. Expanding detention capacity without first demonstrating the ability to meet these responsibilities is unacceptable.

Given these concerns, I request that ICE provide complete written responses to the following questions no later than December 3, 2026. I further urge ICE to refrain from housing additional detainees in the expansion until the agency has demonstrated that the facility meets all applicable health, safety, staffing, and detention standards.

1. What is the total projected cost of constructing, staffing, maintaining, and operating the expansion over its anticipated lifespan? Please provide an itemized breakdown of all expenditures, including construction, medical infrastructure, personnel, security, utilities, transportation, and contingency funding.
2. What alternatives to expanding detention capacity at Batavia did ICE consider, including community-based alternatives to detention and the use of existing facilities? Please provide any cost-benefit analyses, feasibility studies, or written assessments supporting the decision.
3. Why did ICE determine that a sole-source contract was necessary for the expansion?
4. Please identify all contractors and subcontractors involved in the expansion, including Akima Infrastructure Protection, and provide copies of relevant contracts, task orders, modifications, statements of work, and performance requirements.
5. What oversight mechanisms will ICE employ to ensure contractors comply with contract requirements, detention standards, and applicable federal law? Who will serve as the contracting officer and contracting officer's representative?
6. Recent reporting identified approximately \$3 million in additional federal contracts associated with work at Batavia. Are these projects related to the proposed expansion, and are their costs included within the approximately \$17 million budget?
7. Has ICE acquired or sought to acquire additional property in Batavia for future detention expansion? If so, what is the intended purpose, estimated cost, and anticipated capacity of any subsequent development?
8. DHS records have described the proposed expansion as both a "hard-sided" and "soft-sided" facility. What specific structure will be constructed, and will it consist of tents, trailers, modular buildings, or permanent construction?
9. Please provide architectural plans, site plans, floor plans, engineering assessments, and specifications identifying all proposed sleeping areas, bathrooms, showers, medical facilities, visitation rooms, recreation areas, and security infrastructure.
10. When did construction begin, what is the anticipated completion date, and when does ICE expect to begin housing detainees in the new structure?
11. What is Batavia's current authorized detention capacity, and what will its total capacity be following completion of the expansion? Please provide monthly occupancy figures for the preceding 12 months and explain whether the existing facility has operated above its rated capacity.

12. How will ICE ensure that the proposed temporary structure can safely withstand Western New York's winter conditions, including subzero temperatures, substantial snowfall, and severe storms? What contingency plans will ICE implement in the event of structural failure, loss of essential utilities, or other conditions that render the facility uninhabitable or noncompliant with detention standards?
13. Will the proposed facility have separate facilities and medical infrastructure, or will it rely on the existing detention facility? What assessments have been conducted to determine whether existing infrastructure can support the increased population and the addition of women?
14. Will the new structure exclusively house women? DHS has indicated that men could also be housed there if operational needs change. Under what circumstances would this occur, who would authorize it, and what advance notice would Congress receive?
15. Will female detainees share any housing units, bathrooms, showers, recreational spaces, medical facilities, hallways, holding areas, or transportation arrangements with male detainees? Please identify every space intended for shared use and the measures that will prevent inappropriate contact or exposure.
16. What criteria will ICE use to determine which women are transferred to or detained at Batavia? Please explain how criminal history, civil immigration status, custody classification, medical conditions, pregnancy, caregiving responsibilities, and vulnerability to abuse will factor in placement decisions.
17. How many additional correctional officers, medical professionals, supervisors, and support personnel will be required to operate the expansion? Please provide staffing projections by position, shift, gender, and employer.
18. How will ICE ensure that adequate female staff is available to conduct searches, supervise women's housing areas, respond to emergencies, and provide appropriate assistance to detainees?
19. How will ICE process, inventory, store, and return women's personal belongings upon admission, including clothing, identification, medications, hygiene products, and other personal property? What procedures will address missing or improperly withheld items?
20. Can ICE affirm that the expansion will not be used to detain children or operate as a family detention facility? What binding operational restrictions will prevent their conversion to family detention without prior congressional notification?
21. What medical facilities currently exist on-site at Batavia, and what additional facilities will be constructed as part of the expansion? Please identify the number of examination rooms, treatment areas, medical beds, isolation rooms, and behavioral health consultation spaces.
22. The June 2025 DHS Inspector General report identified vacant physician and dentist positions that resulted in delays in medical care, and DHS has identified a need for approximately 32 additional medical and support positions. Please provide current

medical staffing levels, vacancies, and recruitment plans, including how many of the 32 additional positions have been funded and filled, when ICE anticipates reaching full staffing, and whether a medical provider will always be available on-site or on call.

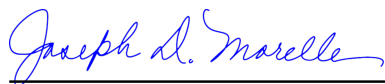
23. What arrangements will ICE establish to provide obstetric and gynecological care, pregnancy testing, prenatal examinations, ultrasounds, postpartum care, and emergency reproductive health services? Which services will be provided on-site, and which will require transportation to outside medical facilities?
24. How will ICE address the needs of nursing mothers and postpartum detainees, including access to lactation facilities, breast pumps, refrigeration and storage of expressed milk, and medically appropriate accommodation?
25. My office has received concerns regarding delays in providing detainees with prescribed medications, including instances in which prescriptions were allegedly not filled or only partially dispensed. What procedures ensure timely access to prescribed medication following admission or transfer, and how does ICE document and investigate interruptions in treatment?
26. What additional mental health services, trauma-informed care, and specialized treatment will be available to women, including survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, or human trafficking?
27. What facilities will be available for confidential legal consultations following the expansion, including private meeting rooms, video conferencing stations, and telephone lines? Please identify their number, location, and square footage, whether they will be located in the temporary structure or existing facility, and how ICE will accommodate urgent attorney requests, court deadlines, and interpretation services.
28. How will ICE guarantee that attorney-client consultations remain confidential and free from monitoring? What protections will ensure that spaces designated for legal consultation are not subsequently converted into additional detention housing or other uses?
29. My office has received reports that attorneys often wait four to five days to schedule a virtual meeting with a detainee at Batavia. What is the current average and maximum waiting period for legal video consultations, and how will ICE ensure that the expansion does not further delay access to legal counsel?
30. What is the facility's policy regarding on-site parking and physical access for attorneys, paralegals, interpreters, social workers, and other authorized legal support personnel? Have any restrictions been implemented due to construction, and what alternatives are provided if parking or access is denied?
31. How will family visitation be conducted for women housed in the expanded facility? What accommodation will be provided for mothers with infants or young children, including breast-feeding mothers? Will ICE permit appropriate contact visitation and make accommodation for caregivers traveling substantial distances?

32. What improvements will be made to the facility's website and public guidance on visiting, contacting, and providing funds to detainees?
33. How will ICE ensure that women detainees receive adequate nutrition, including medically necessary diets, prenatal and postpartum nutritional accommodations, and religious dietary requirements?
34. Please provide Batavia's current commissary price schedule, including reported charges of approximately \$0.10 for individual salt and sugar packets. Who establishes these prices, how are they reviewed, and what essential items are available without charge?
35. My office has received allegations of missing or improperly deducted funds from detainee commissary accounts. What procedures govern the collection, accounting, transfer, and reimbursement of detainee funds? Please provide the number of financial grievances filed during the preceding 12 months and their dispositions.
36. What hygiene products, menstrual supplies, clothing, laundry services, showers, and other personal necessities will be provided to women at no cost? How will ICE ensure adequate supplies and privacy in the temporary facility?
37. What corrective actions has ICE completed in response to DHS Office of Inspector General Report OIG-25-24, issued June 3, 2025? Please explain how ICE will prevent previously identified deficiencies from recurring or worsening after the expansion.

Please respond to each question and include all responsive documentation, including contracts, memoranda, inspection findings, staffing plans, and other relevant records. Where documents or information are withheld or redacted, please identify the legal basis for doing so.

The apparent rush to expand detention capacity, coupled with longstanding deficiencies in medical staffing and unanswered questions regarding the facility's construction and operation, raises serious concerns about ICE's ability to ensure the safety and humane treatment of individuals in its custody. I fully expect ICE to provide the transparency and accountability necessary for Congress to fulfill its oversight responsibilities.

Sincerely,



Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress