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SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,
VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

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May 26, 2026

Hon. Markwayne Mullin
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528

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

Secretary Mullin and Acting Director Venturella,

I write regarding the Department of Homeland Security's decision to move forward with plans to convert warehouses in Socorro, Texas into large-scale immigration detention facilities despite ongoing legal challenges, public opposition, and serious unresolved concerns as to the impact these facilities would have on local communities.

As you are aware, my office previously expressed strong opposition to the expansion of immigration detention facilities in El Paso County following the deaths of three individuals at Camp East Montana, including one death ruled a homicide by the El Paso County Medical Examiner. El Pasoans have repeatedly and overwhelmingly voiced opposition to further expansion of detention centers in our community.

Nevertheless, recent reporting¹ has confirmed that DHS and ICE are continuing preparations to retrofit ~826,000² square feet of warehouses in Socorro into detention facilities without first demonstrating how such a project would avoid devastating impacts on a community already struggling with limited resources, rising costs, strained infrastructure, and water insecurity.

Equally troubling is the manner in which DHS has proceeded. Local officials in Socorro have stated publicly that federal authorities failed to notify or meaningfully engage with the city before purchasing the properties. In April, the El Paso County Attorney's Office sued the Federal government over DHS and ICE's failure to respond to Freedom of Information Act requests for information relating to the planned facilities, including site maps, applicable permitting requirements and processes, public notice, and public comment periods or meetings. Residents and local leaders have also repeatedly raised concerns regarding impacts on water usage, electricity usage, traffic, and neighborhood safety. On March 19, 2026, Socorro adopted an ordinance establishing a citywide moratorium on large custodial facilities, including prisons,

¹ [ICE moving forward with warehouse detention plan despite lawsuits, probe - The Washington Post](#)

² [ICE is quietly buying warehouses for its detention expansion | AP News](#)

jails, and detention centers housing more than 100 persons³. Yet DHS appears determined to continue this project before conducting the level of review and community engagement that Americans should expect from their federal government.

What is especially concerning is the inconsistency in DHS's approach. In multiple states, including Maryland and New Jersey, DHS has agreed to conduct environmental reviews before construction proceeds on detention projects. Why are some communities afforded transparency while communities like Socorro are expected to accept massive detention infrastructure without meaningful consultation?

At a minimum, I strongly urge DHS to complete the following before proceeding further with any detention-related construction or operations in Socorro or elsewhere in El Paso County:

- Conduct comprehensive environmental assessments evaluating impacts on water supply, wastewater systems, electricity infrastructure, roadway capacity, air quality and public health;
- Consult directly with local elected officials, local health authorities, emergency response personnel, stakeholders, and impacted community members regarding any proposed detention facility;
- Hold at least one (1) public listening session open to the public in the affected community;
- And publicly respond in writing to concerns raised by residents and local governments regarding the proposed facility.

If DHS is willing to conduct environmental reviews and engage communities elsewhere, then its refusal to provide the same transparency and scrutiny in Socorro raises a simple question: what exactly is the Department hiding about the true impact these facilities will have on our community?

Communities like Socorro deserve transparency, accountability, and respect from their federal government – not secrecy, rushed timelines, and massive detention projects imposed without community consent. I continue to stand firmly with the residents of Socorro, El Paso County, and the many local leaders and constituents who have spoken out against the expansion of immigration detention facilities in our community.

Sincerely,



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

³ https://costx.us/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Regular-Council-Agenda-March-19-2026_001.pdf