



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

November 7, 2025

The Hon. Kristi Noem
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security

The Hon. Todd Lyons
Acting Director
U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement

Secretary Noem and Acting Director Lyons:

I am writing to follow up on my letter from September 26, 2025. In it, I expressed grave concerns regarding operations at Camp East Montana, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facility on Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas.

In my September letter, I detailed issues that my staff and I had observed at Camp East Montana during two separate oversight visits to the facility. These issues ranged widely, including insufficient staffing to keep both personnel and detainees safe, inadequate access to legal counsel for detained migrants, urgent concerns that detainees were being served rotten food and unsafe drinking water, and a persistent issue with unattended facility phones. I also highlighted alarming findings from a report in *The Washington Post*¹, many of which were consistent with what my staff and I observed during our oversight visits. My letter also included a list of urgent questions regarding contractors and services at the facility.

As of the date of this follow-up letter, my office has yet to receive a response to our original letter. However, in the month since we reached out with concerns, my staff and I have continued to hear from detainees at Camp East Montana. We have learned that some of the issues I highlighted in my September letter have not been adequately resolved, and the site appears to have developed additional problems.

According to detainees that my staff and I have heard from, the drinking water at the facility continues to taste foul, the food quality for detainees has not improved, and some detainees are skipping meals altogether due to a lack of dietary accommodations. Detainees have shared that their dormitory pods are cleaned only once every eight days, despite pods housing up to 72 people at a time. Two separate detainees we spoke with shared that people are requesting brooms to keep their pods tidy between weekly cleanings. Laundry services are not consistent, and people are washing their clothes in the facility showers. I understand that both unreliable cleaning and laundry service are known issues to ICE leadership. Please provide the name of the

¹ [ICE's new Fort Bliss detention center violated 60 federal standards - The Washington Post](#)

current contractors responsible for these services and the actions ICE has taken to ensure consistent cleaning and laundry services.

Additionally, we have been told that the facility frequently experiences flooding and sewage backups. This is unacceptable. Stagnant water and sewage are serious hazards that can lead to illness and disease. Please detail the steps ICE has taken to ensure that these issues are permanently resolved.

People have shared concerns regarding Camp East Montana's potentially inadequate medical care: only the most ill detainees are referred to the medical unit and there are inconsistencies as to how soon after arriving detainees are able to undergo initial medical screenings. Detainees have also shared that access to necessary medications has been inconsistent, with some people receiving their medication while others have not. My office is aware of a detainee who is living with HIV but has not been receiving his medication.

Furthermore, I am concerned that, due to the pace of population turnover, neither ICE nor staff at the facility have an accurate headcount of the population at Camp East Montana. Please provide my office with the most up-to-date population census numbers; including the amount of people with pending court dates; the average number of detainees who have volunteered to self-deport and are still at the facility; the average number of people who are in-processed and out-processed from the facility within a 24-hour period; and the average length of stay of detainees.

I demand that ICE and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) respond to these concerns and enumerate what steps, if any, are being taken to guarantee the safety and wellbeing of all the people currently detained at Camp East Montana, their families, and the staff there.

I am also including the list of questions from my original letter below. I urge ICE and DHS to provide my office with detailed responses by November 24, 2025.

1. When our office first visited, we were informed that Camp East Montana had "about" 300 support staff consisting of contractors and about 40 ICE staff on site, and that whenever the facility reaches a 3,000-bed capacity, the number of ICE staff "should" be 10 ICE supervisors and 40 Deportation officers.
 - a. What will the contractor staffing numbers be at 3,000 and 5,000 beds?
2. During our August 28th visit, our office discussed the list of the vendors at Camp East Montana with staff, including the food vendor that was local to El Paso and was in the process of phasing out, and the new food vendor that would replace them. Please provide the names of those vendors.
3. We were informed that ICE had re-hired retired staff and annuitants to bring them on in a supervisory role. With these new hires, how many supervisory staff are now on site?
4. What processes are in place to ensure that phones are being answered 24 hours a day, as is necessary, at Camp East Montana? Our office has heard from staff at a local legal service provider organization that it can be difficult to connect with staff at Camp East Montana over the phone. One legal service provider reportedly placed 25 calls to Camp East Montana before staff at the facility answered the phone.

5. What is the current status of construction on the walkway between the visitor area and the meeting space? Are there plans to ensure this walkway is enclosed and protected from the elements in the future?
6. My staff recommended that staff at Camp East Montana connect with the City of El Paso Public Health Department as a preventative public health measure against potential outbreaks of illnesses at Camp East Montana. My staff also provided contact information for the city's public health director. Please confirm if staff at Camp East Montana has made efforts to connect with the City of El Paso Public Health Department.
7. Multiple detainees spoke to me and my staff about the quality of the drinking water at Camp East Montana. Several people told us the water smelled bad and made them ill after drinking it. Please confirm where the water is being sourced and what tests are being conducted to ensure it meets all applicable standards for drinking water.

In addition to the questions from my original letter, I am including the additional questions below:

1. Please clarify the number of shifts per week that contracted staff are currently scheduled to work, the number of shifts per week contracted staff currently works, and the duration of each shift.
2. Please clarify how many detainees have escaped from Camp East Montana. Include details on if they were taken back into custody, how long they were outside of the facility, and what their current condition is.
3. Please clarify what protocols are in place to determine when a detainee requires medical attention beyond the capabilities of Camp East Montana and how quickly a detainee will be transferred to a local healthcare facility.
 - a. Which staff are responsible for ensuring the medical wellbeing of detainees at Camp East Montana?
 - b. What facility-specific training, if any, do these staff members receive before being able to interact with and make medical determinations for detainees at Camp East Montana?
 - c. Which staff are responsible for ensuring continuation of care for detainees at Camp East Montana once they are discharged from the local healthcare facility at which they received care?
 - d. Under what circumstances would a detainee with required follow-up care be unable to keep their appointments and meet with their healthcare team?
 - e. Under which circumstances would a detainee who has received necessary and invasive care at a local healthcare facility continue to be housed at Camp East Montana at all, especially if staff is unable or unwilling to ensure compliance with necessary continuation of care off-site?

Conditions at Camp East Montana are dangerous and inhumane; they have been since the facility opened at the beginning of August (when it was still an active construction site), and only seem to be deteriorating. It is increasingly clear that it is not a safe nor professionally managed facility. Continuing to detain people at Camp East Montana means continually exposing people to risks from bad water, unhygienic conditions, poorly built facilities, and a general lack of security and reliable management.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your responses by November 24, 2025.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Veronica Escobar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress