

January 7, 2026

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

The Honorable Todd Lyons
Acting Director
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Director Lyons:

I strongly condemn the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)'s recent surge of activity in central Ohio, dubbed "Operation Buckeye." Since December 17, 2025, ICE officers have detained at least 214 people in the Columbus area – over 80% were Latinos and 10% were black.¹ These racially targeted raids began right before Christmas as a way to strike fear into the immigrant community and have largely targeted individuals without a criminal record. Furthermore, I have serious concerns surrounding the process and legal justification for this ICE operation.

During this operation, ICE has claimed that individuals detained are the "worst of the worst," yet investigations and on-the-ground reporting from Columbus contradict this claim. ABC 6 discovered that the majority of the detainees they investigated had no criminal records.² One report even found that on December 17, 2025, ICE agents allegedly detained two U.S. citizens and a Mexican immigrant with a valid work permit, including a woman with an 8 month old child, and all three of these individuals did not have a criminal record.³

Operation Buckeye is also specifically targeting sensitive locations as a way to increase fear and anxiety within the immigrant communities of central Ohio. There have been multiple first-hand

¹ <https://ohioimmigrant.org/blog/2025/12/24/operation-buckeye-is-a-black-eye-for-ice>

² <https://abc6onyourside.com/news/local/ice-operation-in-columbus-ohio-targets-alleged-criminals-but-records-raise-questions>

³ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/68460a37f903140728c2ab29/t/694c688b7ed731554f677010/1766615179981/%E2%80%99C+Operation+Buckeye%E2%80%9D+is+a+Black+Eye+for+ICE_.pdf

reports of ICE targeting schools with large Hispanic populations.⁴ Furthermore, there has been a dramatic drop in attendance at churches and mosques as parishioners are afraid to attend.⁵

Operation Buckeye is also hurting the economy of central Ohio. Many minorities, including citizens and legal permanent residents, are terrified to go to work or even go to the grocery store to buy food out of fear that they will be detained by ICE due to the color of their skin. Local business owners have reported that heightened immigration enforcement has driven customers away, which is particularly devastating during the busy holiday sales season.⁶

Due to the numerous reports last year of ICE agents overstepping their legal authority and the blatant racial profiling involved in Operation Buckeye, I am extremely concerned about the legality of the detainments. Any operation of this scale demands full transparency regarding the legal basis and the status of those detained. As such, I am requesting the following information to better help my constituents and ensure clear answers on ICE's current activities in OH-03:

1. The full name, detention facility, and exact location of every individual detained from OH-03 currently in ICE custody;
2. The legal justification for their detention, including charges, proceedings, case status;
3. Whether the detainee has a criminal record;
4. A detailed account of compliance with current law and procedures regarding the conditions in which individuals are being held, including access to medical care, mental health services, food, and legal counsel; and
5. A full report on whether any complaints have been filed or internal reviews conducted related to racial profiling or discriminatory targeting during recent enforcement operations.

Please respond to this inquiry no later than Jan 31, 2026.

Sincerely,



Congresswoman Joyce Beatty (OH-03)

⁴ <https://austinkocher.substack.com/p/ice-descends-on-columbus-ohio-hits>

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<https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/local/2025/12/23/columbus-catholics-who-fear-ice-excused-from-mass-bishop-says/87902532007/>

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<https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/local/2025/12/23/columbus-catholics-who-fear-ice-excused-from-mass-bishop-says/87902532007/>