

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2013

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the proposal to allow a for-profit detention company to own and operate an immigration detention center in Illinois. We are troubled by the evidence suggesting that for-profit detention companies fail to create a safe working environment with adequate compensation for their employees and have adverse consequences on the safety of immigration detainees.

While we strongly support job creation in Illinois, concerns about the use of for-profit detention companies are well documented. There is evidence to suggest that for-profit detention companies do not pay wages that are equal to those found in publicly operated facilities. According to the 2000 Corrections Yearbook, public corrections offers made an average annual salary of \$23,002 compared to \$17,628 in for-profit prisons. For-profit prisons also had a 52% staff turnover rate, compared to 16% in public prisons. Moreover, several lawsuits have been filed against for-profit prisons that allege illegal working conditions for their employees. In 2009, a for-profit prison company settled a lawsuit concerning the misclassification of workers at sixty-five facilities in nineteen states in order to prevent them from receiving adequate overtime pay.¹ A subsequent lawsuit filed in 2012 alleged that a for-profit prison center in Kentucky failed to provide adequate overtime for employees and placed unlawful mandates on employees.²

With regard to inmate and staff safety, a 2001 George Washington University study found that for-profit prisons had 50% more inmate-on-staff assaults and 65% more inmate-on-inmate assaults than in public prisons. In addition, there have been several notable allegations of such violence and sexual assaults in for-profit immigration detention facilities. In recent years, lawsuits have been filed against for-profit detention companies in Kentucky, Idaho, and Arizona, raising serious concerns about the treatment of detainees within these detention centers.

Finally, as Congress continues to debate comprehensive immigration reform, we feel it is prudent for the Department of Homeland Security to postpone the construction of a new immigration detention facility, as the passage of comprehensive immigration reform could drastically change need to detain undocumented immigrants.

¹ Keith E. Barnwell Et Al. v Corrections Corporation of America. US District Court for the District of Kansas. 19 Feb. 2009. Print.

² Michael E. Johnson Et Al. v Corrections Corporation of America. Western District of Kentucky. 25 May 2012. Print.

We ask that you reconsider allowing a for-profit detention company to construct an immigration detention center in Illinois. Thank you for your consideration.

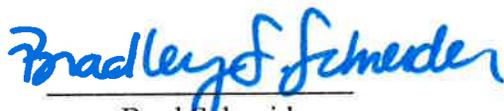
Sincerely,



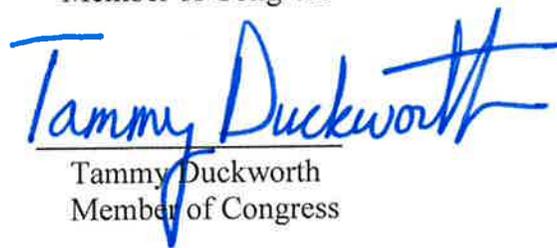
Bill Foster
Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Brad Schneider
Brad Schneider
Member of Congress



Tammy Duckworth
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